BLACK MAN IN A WHITE MAN'S WORLD:

ABORIGINAL CRICKETER EDDIE GILBERT.

Kenneth David Edwards
MSc BEd DipT

A thesis submitted to the
Department of Human Movement Studies
University of Queensland.
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

September 1992
STATEMENT

I certify that this is an original piece of research. It is based on primary sources and except where otherwise acknowledged, all conclusions are my own. All primary and secondary sources are acknowledged and correct to the best of my knowledge. The material has not been submitted, in whole or part, for a degree at this or any other University.

Kenneth David Edwards
ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the life of Aboriginal cricketer Edward ('Eddie') Gilbert. Eddie Gilbert, as a detribalised Aborigine, was subjected to various influences which affected his personal and cricket career and which were significantly different from those to which a white person and other Aborigines from a similar background may have been exposed.

Eddie Gilbert is perhaps the best remembered of all Aboriginal cricketers to play first-class cricket in Australia. He was a member of the Queensland Sheffield Shield team at various times between 1930 and 1936. During his first-class cricket career of 23 matches for Queensland he took 87 wickets at the respectable average of 29.21 runs per wicket.

Gilbert grew up on a Government controlled reserve at Barambah (later Cherbourg) in southern Queensland. This thesis explores the influence of a background where the daily life of inmates was controlled by the operation of the Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (1897).

Eddie Gilbert took an interest in cricket during his teens, and was devastating in local competition. He was later selected to play cricket for Queensland at the first-class level. His cricket career meant a great deal to the people at Cherbourg.

The question of race was a significant factor that determined the course of the career of Eddie Gilbert and there were many other issues. This thesis critically explores and examines aspects of racism in sport.

Gilbert had a highly controversial cricket career which was dogged by rumours about his bowling action. These controversies served to make him more appealing to the general public. This thesis seeks to analyse these events with regard to Gilbert's racial background.

The achievement that Eddie Gilbert is remembered for more than any other is his dismissal of the legendary Don Bradman for no score in a match at Brisbane in November 1931. It was an achievement which awarded Gilbert national fame.
There were times during Gilbert's career when he was proposed as being good enough to play for Australia. This was not to occur.

Cricket did not prove to be an agent of social mobility and assimilation for Eddie Gilbert. He was to have his moment of fame and a limited amount of social acceptance - but this was to be a passing and temporary experience. Gilbert was never able to achieve any measure of social mobility or financial reward.

Through a degree of cross-racial popularity Eddie Gilbert survived to expose certain myths, inconsistencies and contradictions in the so-called 'classless' but nevertheless racist Australian society. This thesis attempts to investigate and explain the basis and extent of this situation.

A gradual decline in Gilbert's personal life after his cricket career had ended showed that his success in first-class cricket was to be of little value in re-establishing a fulfilling life amidst the controls and pressures of settlement life. He was to live an aimless life for several years after his first-class career ended in 1936. In 1949 he began to develop signs of mental instability and he was finally sent to an appropriate institution. He spent his remaining years there and died in 1978.

In addition to the various chapters of the study, material was prepared which indicates an understanding of the wider aspects of race relations in Queensland and an outline of the history and other aspects at Cherbourg settlement. These will serve as a background to the study and are presented as a separate volume.
Figures

Map of South-east Queensland.

P.1. Map of Cape York Peninsula, North Queensland, showing distribution of Aboriginal tribes. 3

P.2. Native dance, Cooktown tribe. 10

P.3. School children at Barambah settlement 1912 - Eddie Gilbert amongst this group. 10

1.1. Barambah cricket team - 1930s. 17

1.2. Eddie Gilbert bowling. 23

1.3. Eddie Gilbert - grip on the ball. 23

1.4. Eddie and Edith Gilbert - wedding photograph. 31

1.5. Eddie Gilbert - cricketer. 34

1.6. The legend of Eddie Gilbert. 36

1.7. Eddie Gilbert bowling in the practice nets. 56

2.1. Queensland versus South Australia - Parry caught off Gilbert. 69

2.2. Queensland cricket team 1930-31 season. 69

2.3. Under a Cloud - some doubts expressed. 76

2.4. Aborigines in cricket - a newspaper view. 76

2.5. Does He Bowl or Throw? 80

2.6. Queensland Colts player Eddie Gilbert. 86

2.7. This Gilbert Business - a racist view. 90

2.8. Gilbert involved in a mock trial during the Sydney game. 93

2.9. A welcome to Melbourne for the Queensland team. 96

2.10. A cartoon summary of the Queensland versus Victoria match December 1930. 102

2.11. Gilbert misses a chance given by Constantine of the bowling of Thurlow. 114

2.12. The funeral of Collie Sheridan. 115

3.1. Bowling Ban on Gilbert. 127

3.2. The Bulletin cartoon on Aborigines in cricket. 127

3.3. Eddie Gilbert and Len Allen - film interview. 130

3.4. Donald Bradman the master batsman. 136

3.5. Bill caught by Waterman off Gilbert. 139

3.6. Bradman stumbled and fell after Gilbert's second delivery. 139

3.7. Waterman, the wicketkeeper, catches Bradman off Gilbert. 143

3.8. Gilbert's bowling action in various stages. 148

3.9. Eddie Gilbert - a bowler under 'attack.' 157

4.1. A section of the crowd watching the Queensland versus South Africa game. 176

4.2. Gilbert stumped by Van der Merwe off Vincent's bowling. 177

4.3. Queensland versus Victoria match summary. 181

4.4. Gilbert No-balled Again. 182

4.5. Queensland Sheffield Shield touring team 1931-32. 188

4.6. Throw or Bowl? - the special photograph of Gilbert's bowling. 189

4.7. Arm Theory. 195

4.8. Hurwood, Hele and Holdsworth - some key figures of the southern tour. 195

4.9. Newspaper headline from Queensland versus South Australia match 1931. 204

5.1. Eddie Gilbert with Mrs. Doris Crawford (Headmaster's wife) and Mrs. Pat Bourke (Dormitory matron). 206

5.2. Cottages at Barambah (Cherbourg) settlement. 210

5.3. Advertisement for cricket match at Ipswich. 218

5.4. Eddie Gilbert and his favourite dog. 224

5.5. Barambah cricket team with settlement officials. 224
5.6. White settlement officials - 1930s. 233
5.7. A cartoonist's impression of the Fourth Test. 247
5.8. Body-line bowling in action. 248
5.9. What's All This Fuss About Leg Theory? 251
6.1. The state selectors (Holdsworth, Gill and Hutcheon) confer with Gilbert. 257
6.2. Schoolboys' idol - Gilbert surrounded by admiring youngsters. 257
6.3. Tobin (South Australia) clean bowled by Gilbert for 47. 262
6.4. Richardson and Lonergan walk to the pavilion, followed by Gilbert, at the end of the Sheffield Shield game. 262
6.5. England cricket team 1932-33 tour. 266
6.6. International cricket - Queensland versus England. 266
6.7. Gilbert with cricket ball. 271
6.8. Listening to Test 1933. 276
6.9. Murgon Representative cricket team 1933. 281
6.10. Gilbert in settlement band. 293
6.11. Local identity Eddie Gilbert. 296
7.1. Eddie Gilbert playing harmonica. 300
7.2. Gilbert with cousins and film producer. 304
7.3. Settlement inmates practising for a display. 304
7.4. Sports day on the settlement. 307
7.5. Eddie Gilbert batting. 323
7.6. Victims of Gilbert's bowling. 330
7.7. In Deadly Mood - Gilbert bowling against New South Wales. 336
7.8. 'The Fastest Thing on Earth.' 344
7.9. Advertisement for Queensland versus M.C.C. match. 352
7.10. Queensland versus M.C.C. match information. 352
7.11. Queensland Sheffield Shield team 1935-36 southern tour. 359
8.1. Queensland Sheffield Shield players. 371
8.2. Split-second Speed. 373
8.3. Wyeth batting with Woolloongabba scoreboard in background. 381
8.4. An Artist's Sidelight on Shield cricket - Queensland versus South Australia. 386
8.5. Gilbert, the batsman, attacking the South Australian bowling. 386
8.6. Wyeth takes the catch to dismiss Bradman off the bowling of Gilbert. 391
8.7. Queensland versus South Australia - match summary. 392
8.8. Personal note written by Gilbert. 393
8.9. A section of the crowd at Woolloongabba during a Sheffield Shield match in 1936. 409
9.1. Cherbourg settlement - 1930s. 425
9.2. Cherbourg Football team 1930s. 429
9.3. Eddie Gilbert - a photographic portrait. 439
9.4. Settlement worker Gilbert. 442
9.5. Eddie Gilbert bowling for Toombul against Warehouse. 448
9.6. Black man in a white world. 451
9.7. Cherbourg cricket team 1938. 464
10.1. Gilbert in the late 1940s. 465
10.2. Eddie Gilbert at Wacol Hospital in early 1970s. 475
10.3. Notice of Death. 498
Tables

1. First-Class Career Statistics of Eddie Gilbert. ix
2. Sheffield Shield Statistics. x
3. Other First-Class Matches. xi
Acknowledgments

Although time-consuming, the preparation of this thesis was enjoyable and personally rewarding. It allowed me the opportunity to research different areas; to meet and speak with some fascinating people; to view documents and records long neglected; and to visit various libraries, institutions and government facilities.

I undertook this project through an interest in Aborigines and sport and learned a great deal from the experience. In completing the thesis I am indebted to many people for their assistance and encouragement.

I am very grateful to Prof. Max Howell, my supervisor, for his support, and his understanding of the difficulties which arose as a part-time student. His comments, and advice, were greatly appreciated. He continually re-assured me of the value of this study and spent considerable time reviewing and making constructive comments.

The study could not have been completed without the assistance of many people who freely gave of their time and provided materials and valuable contacts for further information. Some of those who personally shared their stories and experiences included Nellie Sheridan, Norm Fisher, Roy Fisher, Jack Fisher, Cyril Fisher, Eddie Barney, Doug Goodchild, Roy Higgins, Henry Collins, Rita Huggins, Paddy Jerome, Nellie O’Chin, Paddy Wharton, Syd Redgrave, Eileen South, Jack Malone, Gordon Amos, Jill McBride-Levi, Ezra Wyeth, Fred Kratzmann, May McBride and Lambert McBride. These people provided a fascinating insight into events and the life of times past. The interviews with Aboriginal people were essential in providing some explanation of their culture. The generosity and kindness displayed were inspiring and served to balance some negative experiences.

I am grateful to many other people for their assistance in many ways. Dr. Ian Jobling acted for some time as my supervisor in the absence of Prof. Max Howell overseas. He showed a genuine interest in the topic and offered valuable advice. Special appreciation must be extended to Thom Blake for sharing many insights and research materials about Cherbourg. I also received helpful responses and information from Sir Donald Bradman, Alan McGilvray, Betty MacKenzie, Em Toovey and Dr. Ray Evans.

I received very helpful advice and support from friends and colleagues. To these friends, my parents, and relatives who have understood the commitment necessary to complete this thesis I offer my gratitude for their tolerance.

The staff of Queensland State Archives, John Oxley Library, Fryer Library, Main Library (Inter-Library Loans) of University of Queensland, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Islander Studies Library, Mitchell Library, Queensland Museum, Queensland State Parliamentary Library, Queensland Newspapers, and Queensland Cricket Association Archives were most helpful in facilitating access to records and answering my many requests.

The late Gerry Langevad of the Queensland Department of Family Affairs and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs provided access to many valuable pieces of information which allowed the study to be undertaken. Without his assistance at the early stages of the study it may never have progressed. I am also indebted to Les Malezer, Justin Malbon, Gary Bell and Patricia Smith for their later assistance and to Dr. Peter Roper and Dr. Peter Fama, of Wolston Park Hospital, for their recognition of the importance of this study, and for assistance in gaining access to medical
records at the Hospital. This allowed a rare insight into the later life of Eddie Gilbert.

This thesis has required a great deal of personal sacrifice by my family. Through it all they have shown great tolerance, interest and encouragement. My wife, Julie-Ann, has my greatest and sincerest gratitude, particularly for assuming family duties and responsibilities that the pursuit of my study did not always allow me to undertake. My children, Matthew, Timothy and Rebecca have shown special interest in my research and have been very tolerant and patient of my efforts. My daughter, Rebecca, has the honour of having this study dedicated to her.

Without the constant encouragement of my family, and the belief that the study would prove to be a significant and well-researched document, this thesis may not have been completed.
Eddie Gilbert is perhaps the best remembered of all Aboriginal cricketers to play first class cricket in Australia. Considering the playing conditions and standards and, possibly, community attitudes of the time, Gilbert achieved a level of greatness on the cricket field. Perhaps today he may have been more successful. Gilbert was a member of the Queensland Sheffield Shield team at various times between 1930 and 1936.

After word of his success in his local cricket competition in the Murgon district had spread, Gilbert was invited to Brisbane by the Queensland Cricket Association for a net trial and later he participated in the Queensland Country Week carnival in October 1930. His efforts in this Carnival saw him selected in the Queensland Colts team to play New South Wales Colts in the same year. After a fine bowling performance in this match he was selected in the State Sheffield Shield team.

Over the next 6 years Gilbert played in 19 Sheffield Shield matches for Queensland against N.S.W., Victoria, South Australia, and in 4 international matches - against the West Indies, South Africa, England and an M.C.C. team.

Eddie Gilbert was a wiry man of medium height with long arms and fingers. He was a right-hand unorthodox bowler and a left-hand bat. When he bowled he took a run-up of only a few steps before delivering the ball at considerable speed.

He was one of only 15 bowlers who had the rare distinction of dismissing the legendary Don Bradman for a ‘duck’ (no score). This he achieved in Brisbane in November 1931. It was an achievement which gave Gilbert national fame. Press reports of the event made it a sensation, and with this moment of glory the Barambah man stepped into cricket history.

His was a highly controversial career which was dogged by rumours about his bowling action. Motion pictures were taken of Gilbert’s bowling and they seemed to support the claim that his bowling was acceptable. However, the matter was never resolved completely. Playing in Melbourne in December 1931, Gilbert was ‘no-balled’ 11 times in 3 overs by Umpire Barlow.
As a bowler he achieved a number of notable successes. Unfortunately, he was not always successful and endured a number of controversies and set-backs during his career. He suffered shoulder injuries a few times. During one season he was not considered for selection in the State team as some cases of leprosy were detected on the settlement at Cherbourg (formerly Barambah), where he lived. In what was to prove to be the final season of his first-class career, he also faced charges of intimidatory bowling.

He was portrayed in the popular press as a quiet, well-spoken and modest man who neither drank nor smoked and was deeply religious. However, during his career, rumours and reports circulated privately that he was lazy and irresponsible and that he drank heavily if given the opportunity. Gilbert emerged at a time when a majority of Australians strongly supported the idea of a 'White Australia' and there were allegations of racism within some of the State teams in which he played.

Gilbert proved to be of great interest and crowds of people came to see him play. Although there was a degree of novelty value in seeing an Aborigine playing cricket at State level, he was to prove to be a very good fast bowler and he won the admiration and respect of many because of this. His popularity in cricket crossed racial boundaries.

He built up an illustrious reputation, particularly when bowling on the Brisbane wicket. Many Shield batsmen were disconcerted at the thought of having to face this black ‘fireball.’ To the dismay of cricket supporters, many batsmen were seen to be pulling away from the stumps as the ball sped towards them. He was considered to operate best in short spells of a few overs at a time.

During Eddie Gilbert's first-class career of 23 matches for Queensland he took 87 wickets at an average of 29.21. He captured 5 or more wickets in an innings on 6 occasions, with his best figures in an innings being 6 for 64. His batting average was less impressive. In his 41 innings he scored a total of 224 runs for an average of 7.22. His highest score was 34, not out.
He took 4 catches during his career. (see Tables 1, 2 and 3 for career details).

His first-class career was abruptly ended by the Queensland Cricket Association in November 1936, after an apparent loss of form during the Country Week carnival. He returned to the Cherbourg Settlement and continued to play cricket for only a couple of years. He took to drinking and gambling and was not considered to be a good worker. His private life was rather unsettled and he appeared unhappy.

After showing increasing signs of mental instability, Eddie Gilbert was admitted to Wolston Park Hospital in December 1949. He remained there in a state of semi-reality until his death on the 9th of January, 1978. He was buried at Cherbourg on the 12th January, 1978.

There were times during his career when it was suggested he was good enough to play for Australia. This did not occur. It would be fair to say that if Gilbert was in cricket in today, he may have represented Australia. Nevertheless he showed he was a fine cricketer and he represented his State with distinction.
Table 1. First-Class Career Statistics of Eddie Gilbert.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matches</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total First Class Matches</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield Shield Matches</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other First Class Matches</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Batting</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Innings</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not out</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Score</td>
<td>34 (not out)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runs</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>7.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bowling</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balls</td>
<td>4920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overs</td>
<td>615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maidens</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runs</td>
<td>2521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wickets</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>28.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fielding</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catches</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bowling Statistics</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Five Wickets in an Innings</td>
<td>6 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Bowling in an Innings</td>
<td>6 for 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Bowling in a Match</td>
<td>9 for 178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Sheffield Shield Statistics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Matches</th>
<th>Inn.</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>HS.</th>
<th>Runs</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>W.</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Catches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930-31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6.43</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>141.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>503</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>33.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-32</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>117.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>570</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td>27.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932-33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td>141</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>35.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933-34</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>13.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>255</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18.43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935-36</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>169.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>701</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>7.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>514.7</td>
<td></td>
<td>2173</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Other First-Class Matches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Matches</th>
<th>Innings</th>
<th>No. of Innings</th>
<th>Runs</th>
<th>Wickets</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930-31</td>
<td>West Indies</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 catch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-32</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 catches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932-33</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 catches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935-36</td>
<td>M.C.C.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 catches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outline of the Study

The research undertaken was a biography of Eddie Gilbert. Such a study served as a micro-analysis which delivered insights on two levels:

- At the individual level, the life history and opportunities available to an Aboriginal sportsman during the 1930s, and
- At the wider societal level, the opportunity to help understand Aboriginal culture on a reserve, and within the wider dominant white cultural context.

A study of Aboriginal sportspersons is important to Aborigines. The Handbook for Aboriginal and Islander History states that "Biography is the most neglected field of Aboriginal studies." It goes on further to suggest:

> There is a special need for more biographies of Aboriginal people, so that school-children and the general public can understand, and Aboriginal people can take pride in, the Aboriginal contribution to Australian history.

The study was justified because:

1. Aborigines in sport have received little more than passing treatment in the literature. Eddie Gilbert was a well-known cricketer and a hero to many de-tribalised Aboriginals of the 1930s. However, many Australians, both black and white, would not appreciate the achievements and other factors which influenced the life and sporting career of Eddie Gilbert.

2. There is little understanding of the role and achievements of Aborigines in sport. The limited research in the area of Aboriginal sporting history, and its role in Australian sport history, suggested a need for further research.

3. Aboriginal people such as Eddie Gilbert have made a significant contribution to sport in Australia. This study of Eddie Gilbert will encourage recognition of the accomplishments of

---


2 *ibid.*, 21.
Aboriginal sportspersons and may serve to give them further pride in the achievements of Aboriginal people.

4. The study of Eddie Gilbert may allow the opportunity for more informed opinion and tolerance in relation to Aborigines. Due to limited opportunities by Aborigines to gain information and undertake research, and because of prevailing attitudes in white society, sportspersons such as Eddie Gilbert may not be appreciated for their contributions to sport.

5. The level and degree of success of any sportsperson depend upon a number of factors such as personality, motivation and social background. The identification and examination of these factors and influences are of considerable value in gaining knowledge, values and understanding of Aborigines.

The thesis is essentially narrative and chronological because it deals with the career of one man in the context of Australian sport during the 1930s. However, this is not to suggest that the study ignores some examination and analysis of the issues and events that were to affect Gilbert’s life and those of Aborigines generally. No person can be subjected to investigation without some consideration of the interaction with the ideas, movements, or institutions of the times. Therefore, the examination of racial theory, especially as it relates to Aboriginal culture, is an important consideration of this study.

In the 1930s, barriers of racism affected Aboriginal participation and achievement in the white cricketing world. A superficial assessment of the career of Eddie Gilbert may lead to the assumption that sport truly is the world of equal opportunity, completely free of racial discrimination and inequalities, as it is often promoted to be. However, the egalitarian nature of sport can have many contradictions. The success that Gilbert was to enjoy was not a reflection of the opportunities in sport that the Aboriginal population as a whole were given. Gilbert experienced situations which clearly showed he did not escape the harsh realities of racism, even in sport.
Eddie Gilbert, as an Aborigine, was subjected to various influences which affected his personal life and sporting career, and many of these were different to those to which a white person and other Aboriginal people from a similar background may have been exposed. In outlining the situation with regard to Eddie Gilbert a number of aspects were explored in the thesis.

1. The role of the sportswriters, governmental officials and certain other individuals and their influence over the personal life and sporting career of Eddie Gilbert.

2. The extent to which cricket was able to provide a means of social acceptance, integration and upward social mobility for Eddie Gilbert.

3. The influence on the personal life and sporting career of Eddie Gilbert of prevailing governmental policies and the racial attitudes of white people.

4. The 'Aboriginality' of Eddie Gilbert and how it affected his sporting career and served to deny him equal opportunities in life.

5. The nature and extent of the popularity of Eddie Gilbert with Aboriginal and white people.

6. Events in Australia during the 1930s which ensured that Eddie Gilbert was able to have an important influence on Queensland cricket history.
Presentation of Information

This thesis outlines the life and career of Eddie Gilbert and discusses relevant aspects.

Introduction

Prelude - This outlines background and family aspects relevant to the study.

Chapter 1 - The Barambah Boy: covers aspects of Gilbert's early life and his background. This information will outline the factors and influences on his character development as well as his sporting abilities.

Chapter 2 - A First-Class Career Begins: will trace the early first-class cricketing career of Eddie Gilbert during the 1930-31 Sheffield Shield season.

Chapter 3 - A Legend Created: covers the sporting career and personal life of Gilbert during 1931-32.

Chapter 4 - Does Gilbert Throw?: continues the life history of Gilbert during the part of the 1931-32 season with its allegations about his bowling action and also outlines the 1932-33 Sheffield Shield season.

Chapter 5 - Down and Almost Out: looks at Gilbert's limited involvement during the 1933-34 season.

Chapter 6 - A Resumed Career: deals with the 1934-35 Sheffield Shield season.

Chapter 7 - The Queensland Hero: examines aspects of the 1935-36 season as well as focussing on personal aspects.

Chapter 8 - A Career Ends: looks at part of the 1935-36 season and events leading up to the end of Gilbert's first-class career towards the end of 1936.


Chapter 10 - The Curtain Falls: traces his life during his time in a Mental Hospital from 1949 until his death in 1978.
Summary and Conclusions

This thesis covers over seventy years of Queensland history and allows the opportunity for insights at various levels. In addition to the Chapters above, further material was researched and outlined so as to provide a full understanding of the background and context of the study as well as a summary of the achievements of Eddie Gilbert. Its incorporation into the thesis was seen as detracting from the essential theme of the study although helpful in explaining it. This information will be presented as various Appendices.

Appendices

Appendix I - The Queensland Race War: provides an overview of the relationship between Aborigines and white people in Queensland and general information about Aborigines and Government policy towards them.

Appendix II - Barambah (Cherbourg) Settlement: deals with life at Barambah.

Appendix III - First-Class Batting and Bowling Performances: outlines the playing record of Eddie Gilbert.

Appendix IV - Sheffield Shield Playing Record: summarises the results of Queensland Sheffield Shield matches that Gilbert played in.

Appendix V - Other First-Class Matches for Queensland: lists results of Queensland matches other than Sheffield Shield matches in which Eddie Gilbert played.

Appendix VI - General Information: various pieces of information relating to Eddie Gilbert's cricket career.

Appendix VII - Selected Match Performances: summary of Gilbert's performances in local and representative matches.

Sources of Illustrations
Map of South-east Queensland.
PRELUDE

There have been several accounts written about Edward ('Eddie') Gilbert's date of birth and early life. Due to incomplete and contradictory records it is not possible to say with absolute certainty which version is correct.

Edward Gilbert was born some time between 1904 and 1910. Evidence indicates that he was born at Woodford towards the end of 1904, or in early 1905. April 1905 is the most likely date of birth. However, records available from the Aboriginal settlement of Durundur, which was situated near Woodford, make no mention of the birth of Eddie Gilbert in 1905. The year of 1904 is supported by the fact that in 1928 a census undertaken at Barambah Settlement indicated that he was a full-blood Aborigine and gave his age as 24 and that of his brother, Henry, as 27. Henry is recorded as being born at Woodford in 1900. The time of Gilbert's birth being around 1904-05 is further supported by a record that indicates that Eddie Gilbert was admitted to school at Barambah on the 3rd April 1911. The only real doubt about this year is the recollection of Mr. T. Williams, later a Government Minister, who taught Eddie when he was at the "industrial training school for aboriginals in 1920-21." Although this appears longer than the usual length of time that the children spent at school his presence could be explained by him

---

1 Eddie Gilbert, personal file information, State Department of Community Services, 1988. Restricted access. Superintendent Tronson's diaries (copy in possession of Thom Blake) make no mention of Gilbert's birth at Woodford in 1905.


3 Eddie Gilbert, Social History Card, Queensland Department of Community Services, 1988. In June 1900, Durundur was re-opened with the removal of sixty Aborigines from western Queensland.

4 ibid.

5 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 17 September 1936: 12. Mr. T.L. Williams was appointed with the specific task of providing the boys with instruction in the manual arts.
undertaking a course of some description after he had finished his normal school years.

The other account of his date of birth that can be given some degree of credibility is the one that suggests that he was born at Woodford in August 1908. This month and year are the ones that Eddie Gilbert himself was to use when asked and have appeared in many newspaper articles and official documents and is listed on his death certificate. There is some suggestion, however, that this date could have been 'fabricated' by settlement officials to make Gilbert appear younger than he really was and perhaps more acceptable as a 'new' young prospect when he began a first-class cricket career in 1930. This opinion is supported by the fact that his Social History Card from Barambah indicates that he was born at Woodford in 1905.

Eddie Gilbert's parents were Anderson and Alice Gilbert and they were "legally married." According to Henry Collins, a 'nephew' of Eddie Gilbert, Gilbert's parents were members of the Kanju (or Kandju) tribe of north Queensland. Other sources have suggested that Aborigines were "often named after the area where they came from, so it is possible that his tribe was from the Gilbert River region" of north Queensland or "from tribes (names unknown) in the Cooktown region of far north Queensland." Eddie Gilbert, with his close cropped wavy

---


7 Eddie Gilbert, Social History Card, op.cit. During the 1870s an Aboriginal Reserve, 'Biambi,' was established at Durundur. It was later closed. Robert Crawford, teacher at the settlement school for many years was to suggest that Gilbert was born in April 1906. (Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit., information, dated 11 December 1931).

8 ibid.

9 Henry Collins, personal interview, September 1990.


hair, certainly possessed many of the observed physical characteristics of tribes of the area of the Kanju tribe. One inmate, Les Stewart, described him as "a real shiny black." According to another Barambah inmate, Vince Bunda: "The average Aboriginal [sic] is so dark but the Cooktown people are very dark."\footnote{Les Stewart, personal interview, tape in possession of Dr. Ray Evans, University of Queensland. Accessed November 1991.}

\footnote{Vince Bunda, personal interview, tape in possession of Dr. Ray Evans, University of Queensland. Accessed November 1991.}
Later in his life Eddie Gilbert was to state that he was a member of the Wakka-Wakka tribe, but this may have been based on an association with a group that he could identify with, as Barambah was established on the territory of the Wakka-Wakka tribe and this tribe was to hold a special position among the assortment of tribes that made up the reserve.

A review of various materials has made it likely that his parents were shifted from north Queensland under the authority of the Aborigines Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (1897). In the absence of a clear reason for their move there is some possibility that they were initially sent far away from their tribal area to the settlement at Durundur, near Woodford, some time during 1900 as a ‘disciplinary’ measure or for some other ‘convenient’ reason. Durundur was, like other early reserves, characterised by the lack of effective medical treatment, hygiene, balanced diet and education. Removals played a major role in the overall development of the reserve system but had a major impact on Aboriginal cultural and social life.

It is remotely possible that the Gilbert family may have been a part of the Bogimba (Fraser Island) mission experiment of the Southern Protector of Aboriginals, Archibald Meston. The main intention of this reserve was to isolate Aborigines from the presence of whites and it was one of a grand plan of three "strategically situated reserves along the coast where all Aborigines could be located."\(^{14}\) When the Fraser Island Aboriginal Settlement was established in 1897, a number of aboriginals were placed there by the Southern Protector. By the end of 1902, Meston had shifted 216 natives to Fraser Island from centres in South, Central, North and West Queensland.

Despite the suggestion that the Gilbert family were at Fraser Island the only real evidence to support this fact is the inconclusive 1927 record that indicated that Anderson Gilbert was either

then, or in the past, a fisherman. It is possible that this may have only referred to his occupation at that time, for a record from 1921 indicated that he was at that time a labourer. Even if the Gilbert family were at Fraser Island it was only for a short time, for on the closure of the mission in August 1904, 33 went to the Aboriginal settlement at Durundur, near Woodford, and many others were sent to Yarrabah in north Queensland.\textsuperscript{15}

Of the family history, Eddie Gilbert's nephew, Henry Collins, has recalled:

The story I got from my old Granny. They rounded them all up and put some at Charlotte Bay and some went to Weipa and down to Woodford and to Barambah.\textsuperscript{16}

In 1901 The Bulletin reported that the Aborigines at Durundur were dying off quickly, due to the effect of the humid climate upon their prevalent tuberculosis.\textsuperscript{17} After strong protest and a petition by local white residents, the Southern Protector of Aboriginals, Archibald Meston, was instructed to close the reserve. In February 1905, the reserve was disbanded and the Aborigines from there were removed to the settlement at Barambah, also in south-east Queensland. Some Aborigines walked overland from Woodford while others went by train from Caboolture to Wondai and then walked to Barambah.\textsuperscript{18} It is highly likely that the Gilbert family was taken to Barambah with the rest of their people. However, if Eddie were born at Woodford in the time up to 1908 then Anderson and Alice Gilbert may have been remnants of this reserve, possibly living in a fringe camp and engaged in some form of local employment.

\textsuperscript{15} Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals for 1905: 8.

\textsuperscript{16} Henry Collins, personal interview, op.cit.

\textsuperscript{17} Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders and Kathryn Cronin, Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination: Race Relations in Colonial Queensland, Sydney: Australia and New Zealand Book Co., 1975: 352. The local residents had fears about safety and health reasons.

\textsuperscript{18} From Durundur to Woodford 1882-1982, op.cit., 27.
In relation to when the Gilbert family arrived at Barambah one source of information has suggested: "At the age of two years, with his parents, Eddie moved to live in Cherbourg (Barambah)."\(^\text{19}\) Another account has indicated that Eddie "entered the Barambah settlement when about seven years of age, owing to the death of his parents."\(^\text{20}\) The account went on to state:

> As some years before his birth, there was an aboriginal settlement at Woodford, it is possible his parents obtained a considerable smattering of civilised ways there. So Eddie wasn’t altogether a tribal youngster.\(^\text{21}\)

It is not correct that Gilbert lived at Woodford for a number of years. Information from his personal Departmental file notes that Eddie Gilbert "came to Cherbourg with parents as an infant when Settlement closed down. 1906."\(^\text{22}\) This time period is supported by older inmates of Cherbourg.\(^\text{23}\)

In reviewing the various accounts it is most likely that Eddie Gilbert was born in 1905 after the initial group from Woodford went to Cherbourg.

One source of information suggests that Eddie had two brothers, Henry and James.\(^\text{24}\) Records exist about Henry but there is nothing to suggest that he had a brother called James. He is also reported as having two sisters, Effie Collins and Miriam de Silva (Silver).\(^\text{25}\) No records exist concerning Miriam but records indicate that an Effie Collins was born at Barambah in 1917.

\(^\text{19}\) ibid., 155.

\(^\text{20}\) The Referee, 10 December 1930: 19.

\(^\text{21}\) ibid. Gilbert was not a tribal member in the traditional sense.

\(^\text{22}\) Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit. Social History Card.

\(^\text{23}\) Les Stewart, personal interview, op.cit. Various other informants also indicate that Gilbert came to the settlement around 1905 or 1906.

\(^\text{24}\) Henry Collins, personal interview, op.cit.

\(^\text{25}\) ibid.
and there is clear evidence to show that Effie was raised as a sister to Eddie and Henry. The mother of Effie was listed as Alice Gilbert and the father was Billy Collins. Records indicate that Billy was single and as no marriage record is available it can be assumed that Effie was the outcome of a relationship of some description between Billy (30 years old when Effie was born) and Alice Gilbert. The whereabouts of Anderson Gilbert at this time can only be speculated on. He may have been away from the settlement on a work permit or may have been ‘separated’ from Alice. It is most unlikely, with the evidence of later records, that he had died.

There is no documentation available concerning the movement of Eddie Gilbert’s parents around the State and to the settlement at Barambah. Though such information is not central to a consideration of the life of Eddie Gilbert its absence does serve the purpose of pointing out the difficulties involved in attempting to accurately explain events when records are unattainable or missing. Because of the nature of relationships in traditional Aboriginal society it is also often difficult to fully explore and determine some family and tribal relationships.

Archival records show that some Aborigines did return to tribal areas from Barambah either by making application or by absconding. For example, in 1917 at Normanton Gilbert asked permission to be allowed to return to Waterloo Station near Normanton. It is suggested that Alice and Anderson returned to north Queensland in the late 1920s or may have both died around this period of time as there are no records of Alice or Anderson from the late-1920s. A document from 1928 indicated that Anderson was a fisherman, an impossible job to have at Barambah. It is also interesting to note that in 1917 an Alice Gilbert was reported as having

26 Queensland State Archives, Brisbane. HOM/Letter Register 1917, letter 8274.

27 Anglican Church Records relating to Cherbourg. The Church of the Holy Spirit. Department of Community Services, 1989. Death registers covering this period of time and later years list several persons called Gilbert but no Christian names are listed. For example, a Jack Gilbert died of bronchio-pneumonia at the settlement on the 5th of July 1933. Cherbourg Cemetery Register, Department of Community Services.
died of syphilis, but this was not Eddie Gilbert’s mother. There were at least two other Alice Giberts’ at Barambah during this time. A record available on one of these indicates that she was born in the Northern Territory in 1890 (tribal name ‘La-dirra-murra’) and settled at the Doomadgee Mission station in north-west Queensland before eventually being sent to Barambah. It is unlikely that she was Eddie Gilbert’s mother.

Miriam has been reported by a family source as being born in north Queensland and to eventually end up on Palm Island after a number of years. If in fact she existed and was part of the Gilbert family it is impossible to determine but it does lend some support to the suggestion that Anderson and/or Alice went back to north Queensland, possibly on a work permit. Henry Gilbert, Eddie’s brother, married a May Don in 1921 but she died in July 1922. In 1928 Henry was listed as being single. Eddie, along with two ‘cousins,’ one of whom may, in fact, have been Henry, were in a photograph together in 1934. Henry is reported to have returned to north Queensland around this time. He is recalled by one Cherbourg inmate, Sam Chambers, as being “a bigger build than Eddie.” It is interesting to note that no newspaper


29 A number of people live at Doomadgee who have indicated that they are related to Eddie Gilbert may, in fact, be related to this Alice Gilbert. Eddie Barney, personal information, March 1992.

30 Henry Collins, personal interview, op.cit.

31 Queensland State Archives, Cherbourg Transfer 1227, Registers 17 and 18 (Registers of Deaths). May had originally come from Springsure and was 20 years old when she died.

32 1928 Census, op.cit.

33 Eddie Gilbert, photograph file, pictured with cousins, John Oxley Library, Brisbane.

34 Henry Collins, personal interview, op.cit.

article or record of any description during Eddie Gilbert's cricket career makes any reference to his parents other than the already mentioned and untrue suggestion that he was taken to Barambah after their deaths. In view of some information outlined that there was some 'adjustment' of Gilbert's age to allow him to have a cricket career it may have been 'convenient' to have his family 'out of the way.' No records exist of the definite fate of either Anderson or Alice Gilbert and none of the elder residents of the settlement could recall them. Eddie apparently "never used to speak about his parents" later in his life and they obviously had little to do with his early upbringing although they may have had some form of communication with him. Indications are that as a young man Eddie Gilbert had some contact with his mother for a time but there is no clear evidence to point out if he lived with her.

At Barambah Anderson and his wife Alice joined the camp of the 'Cooktown mob,' a grouping of aborigines from north Queensland. This grouping together by tribal affiliation helped 'cushion' some of the effects of removal from their tribal influences and land and helped the Aboriginal inmates partially 'insulate' themselves from white control. At some later stage Anderson and Alice were to be joined by other members of their family and tribal group. There is no evidence to suggest that Eddie Gilbert was initiated into his tribe despite a report that he had tribal marks on his shoulders.

Some time after their arrival at Barambah and probably when he started school Eddie and his brother Henry were placed into the children's dormitory. Corporal punishment was a regular occurrence in the dormitories. In an attempt to inculcate European values any opportunity

36 ibid.

37 Henry Collins, personal interview, op.cit. In his study Blake has suggested that "The Cooktown mob comprised not only of blacks from that specific locality but other inmates from the north who tended to identify with this group." Blake, op.cit., 315.

38 A girls' dormitory was built in 1909 and in 1910 a boys' dormitory was completed.
and excuse were used by settlement officials to move children away from the ‘evil’ influences of the camp areas and into the strictly controlled environment of the dormitories. Parents had no "inalienable right to care for their children"\textsuperscript{39} and the dormitory children had regulated visits to their immediate family. This prevented the opportunity for exposure to Aboriginal culture and its associated group socialisation processes.

Eddie and Henry were subjected to the stringent controls and restricted education programme associated with the dormitory system. Rather than act as a civilising agent in the manner intended in government policy the operation of the school and the dormitories only served to highlight the difference of the Aborigines compared with the poorly modelled attitudes and values of the white officials on the settlement.

In line with the imprecise information about Eddie Gilbert there is some suggestion that at least one lady had a significant role and influence on him during his early years. One inmate, Livingstone Chambers, remembered that an old lady, Cecily Martin, reared him while he was in the dormitory.\textsuperscript{40} Another inmate, Vince Bunda, recalled a big, tall woman, Eva Norman, that Gilbert called ‘Aunt’ and who was a cook in the boys’ quarters. Years later, as an adult, Gilbert "always used to come and see her"\textsuperscript{41} when he returned from being away from the settlement.

Eddie Gilbert’s religious denomination was designated as Church of England. His early religious instruction was to have a significant impact on his early character development and helped ensure his almost total lack of belief in traditional Aboriginal religion.

\textsuperscript{39} Blake, \textit{op.cit.}, 132.

\textsuperscript{40} Livingstone Chambers, personal interview, tape in possession of Dr. Ray Evans, University of Queensland. Accessed November, 1991.

\textsuperscript{41} Vince Bunda, personal interview, \textit{op.cit.}
Figure P.2. Native dance, Cooktown tribe.

Figure P.3. School children at Barambah settlement 1912 - Eddie Gilbert amongst this group.
The reserve system never made any serious attempt to provide an education that would allow Aboriginal children the same opportunities as their white counterparts. At the over-crowded school the children were given a basic knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic in a restricted educational system of about eight years which progressed students to grade 3 or 4 level. The role of the school was seen as preparing the children for a good and industrious life on the settlement. Although white values were a basis of instruction it was not the intention to make the children an imitation of white people.

The students were expected to respect authority and to learn discipline. Neatness and cleanliness were also stressed. With regard to Eddie's school days a former school-mate, Cyril ('Grumpy') Fisher recalled: "He was very quiet, he didn't say much. He used to be teased because he was a very quiet sort of person. I think he was all right with his school work." In preparation for their predetermined role in life the school sought to train the children to be diligent and obedient workers. If the students 'played up' or did not do their work well enough they were punished. Eddie was "quick with his hands and never cheeky." Despite this he used to "get the cane along with the rest of the students."

---

42 A full outline of these and other aspects are included in Appendix 2.
44 Sam Chambers, personal interview, op.cit.
45 ibid.
Livstone Chambers, an inmate of the settlement, remembered a story about a young Eddie Gilbert:

When he was a boy there was a murder here in the early days -- a tribal sort of killing, you know. They knocked this fellow in the head. They tried to bring him around and they couldn't do it and they hit him in the head and he died and they took him down here and threw him in the water down here, see. Tied him up with some wires and stones and things and threw him in the water. Young Eddie was shooting -- shanghaing parrots and the parrot fell right where the body was. Eddie went over to pick up the parrot and saw the body floating and took off.46

Vince Bunda, an inmate, in a comment about this incident, suggested that "He was dark but before he left [Laugh] he was white. I don't think he was superstitious like others. Old people they had their ways."47

Eddie Gilbert, as a dormitory child, had no real education into the identity and cultural heritage of his race. Like many of the other children this cultural gap meant that they were stranded between two cultures - not black or white but 'in between.' Supposedly prepared for the white world, but separate from it, they were surrounded by the influences of Aboriginal life which they were taught to reject and ridicule. The result was a 'muddled' mixture of influences in which the white ways proved dominant. The lack of opportunities offered by the reserve system prompted long-term inmate, Cyril ('Grumpy') Fisher, to resignedly suggest: "Once you're black you were black and that's all there is about it."48

During the years that Eddie Gilbert spent at school sport began to become a fairly important part of reserve life. Although sport was not played for reasons of personal glory or advancement it was later written of Eddie Gilbert that "His proficiency, both as pupil and in

---

46 Livingstone Chambers, personal interview, op.cit.
47 Vince Bunda, personal interview, op.cit.
48 Cyril ('Grumpy') Fisher, personal interview, op.cit.
athletic sports, soon popularised him among both the natives and officials of the settlement.\footnote{49}

He played some cricket but "didn't show much promise as a kid,"\footnote{50} although he proved to be "a champion with the boomerang"\footnote{51} and could throw a cricket ball a long way. He played a little bit of football and tennis and was later to become a competent boxer.

When Eddie completed his schooling about the age of 12 to 14 or more, depending on how much industrial training was undertaken, he would have been assigned to a work party, possibly woodcutting or clearing bush on the reserve or working on buildings or general labouring duties on the settlement. He was also contracted out by the reserve superintendent to work for periods of time on local white-owned farms. Land clearing and associated activities were the major works undertaken until the early 1920s when most of the suitable land in the area was cleared. After this time most of the work was casual farm labour of a menial and strenuous nature. Some of the jobs usually undertaken included seasonal occupations, fruit-picking, dairying, wood-chopping, cane cutting and cattle mustering. The settlement proved to be a place where the inmates were exploited for labour.

This would have been his first ‘real’ contact with the outside world and for a small number it was an invaluable experience that helped them to ‘cope’ with white society.

Boys usually left the dormitory when they finished school and it is possible Gilbert could have gone to a single mens’ quarters. Later in his life Gilbert would refer to his living for a time in the camp area in one of the timber slab and corrugated iron shelters that were common. If this were the case it would have been a ‘shock’ to have been raised in a dormitory then suddenly exposed to the environment from which he had been previously protected.

\footnote{49} The Referee, 10 December 1930: 19.

\footnote{50} Livingstone Chambers, personal interview, op.cit.

\footnote{51} ibid.
In the consideration of the life of a person information about their background and family history is important to Aboriginal people. This is the reason for the extensive outline on this aspect. Because there is very little detail available about daily life in the early years, existing information and the experiences of various people have been used to piece together a picture of Gilbert's experiences. As one explores and examines his career, it is vitally important to remember Gilbert in the context of his life as a settlement inmate.
CHAPTER I

THE BARAMBAH BOY

By the 1930s Australia had seen a long involvement of Aborigines in cricket.

Aborigines had taken so readily to cricket in the early years of white settlement that several settlers saw big possibilities in exploiting their skills. They seemed to have a natural aptitude for the game, for they were quick-footed, had strength and whip in their shoulders and arms and easily mastered fundamentals. Initially they were used to make up the numbers, batting last and rarely securing a bowl. They quickly proved worthy of better treatment.

By 1865 there were records of Aboriginal teams defeating white teams.¹

In 1868 a cricket team went to England, the first to leave these shores, and it was an all-Aboriginal team. Bell’s Sporting Life was to comment on the team prior to their departure:

These natives are not natives of New South Wales, but they hail from the Western Districts of Victoria; and they have evidently profited by their long intercourse with the white man, instead of deteriorating, as is generally the case.

Civilization has not, however, made them forget their native exercises, and they will be quite as much objects of wonder, on account of their corroborees and skill with their weapons as in their professional character as cricketers.²

The team proved to be fairly successful, and in the 47 matches played they won 14, lost 14 and drew 19. The performance of some players, particularly Mullagh, drew praise.

In the early years of this century two Aborigines, Jack Marsh (New South Wales) and Albert Henry (Queensland) represented their states in cricket. Both were to have controversial careers in which allegations of throwing were raised about their bowling actions.³

Sport, particularly cricket, and later football, was to capture the imagination and interest of many people on the Aboriginal settlements. Sport was means of social and moral control

---


² Bell’s Sporting Life, 19 September 1868: 2.

which was encouraged by the white officials on the reserves. Cricket was to have a special appeal and interest to the inmates at Barambah, despite it being the 'imperial gospel' of white people. Cricket embodied values that the white society considered necessary and acceptable. The Queensland Times (Ipswich) in 1905 was to suggest:

Cricket is our ONE game, the one pastime we have all to ourselves...Cricket is essentially and particularly the British Game. It is suited to the genius of the Anglo-Saxon Race.4

Sport was generally seen as providing the opportunity for 'ideal' qualities to be developed. However, for Aborigines to be playing cricket, they were seen to be behaving in ways that were seen as respectable and good. They were to learn "the skills and rituals of the game and the etiquette associated with it such as manliness, sportsmanship, gentlemanship, and mateship."5

Certainly these were 'desirable' behaviours and were far removed from memories of their past.

From the beginning of the settlement at Barambah some of the inmates played informal games of cricket amongst themselves. The main impetus for these matches appears to have come from the inmates themselves. Cricket had been played in earlier years at various reserves around Australia and was particularly popular at Deebing Creek, near Ipswich. A number of the early inmates had come from there and were keen to continue their involvement in the game. In 1906 Superintendent Lipscombe wrote to the Chief Protector of Aboriginals in Brisbane to inquire if he approved "of natives going to Kilikivan to play cricket on Saturdays."6

---

4 The Queensland Times (Ipswich), 28 October 1905: 13.

5 Jill Linda McBride-Levi, personal interview and information, op.cit. The qualities of a 'gentlemanly' cricketer were held to include self-control and the ability to play the game to the end, even when losing, and to accept defeat graciously. All these qualities, it was felt, could be extrapolated to other aspects of life.

6 Queensland State Archives. B.J.T. Lipscombe to Chief Protector of Aboriginals, 26 November 1906, POA/K1. Although not mentioning Barambah settlement a report in the Saturday Observer (Brisbane) on 16 March 1912 indicated: "That in the Murgon district they have a dusky warrior who knows how to play cricket, for last Saturday he scored 68, and followed it up by annexing four wickets."
Figure 1.1 Barambah cricket team - 1930s.
Despite these early matches cricket can generally be considered to have begun in an organised way during 1917 when some Barambah Aborigines, under the inspiration of Jack Daylight, formed their own cricket club. Jack was an intelligent and capable organiser who, according to Vince Bunda from Cherbourg, "recognised the players for what they were." He was a fine slow bowler and a batsman who was admired for "the manner in which he could hit a ball to fine leg."


Cricket and football were popular, and matches with local teams were occasionally arranged. At Barambah, the native team, in return for hospitality previously received, entertained the local team to a day's match, with lunch, on the Settlement.

In 1922 the "two cricket teams at Barambah joined the local association and won most of the matches against neighbouring white teams." Chief Protector Bleakley was to report that

...the Settlement runs two or three cricket teams, under the captaincy of the new school teacher, which can beat any white team around the district. Others are keen on tennis and show real skill.

From the early twenties, sporting contact with local teams gradually developed. This was in contrast with the early policy of the settlement to keep inmates fairly controlled and isolated with regard to sporting contact with locals. Although the Aborigines were initially treated with curiosity there was also a fair degree of interest and courtesy shown. This sporting contact provided the opportunity for social interaction between black and white people which was an

---

7 Vince Bunda, personal interview, op.cit.

8 Betty MacKenzie, personal interview, March 1988. Jack Daylight was one of the delegates to the Murgon Cricket Association which allowed the settlement to play in the local competition.


opportunity that would have been otherwise missing. The skills and enthusiasm of the Aborigines and their playing ability came to be appreciated and were to have a somewhat positive effect on the attitudes of many local people.

This appreciation and attitude change did not extend to the point where the Aborigines could in any way be seen as the equal of the white people. The contact did, however, help to change some of the opinions that local people had about Aborigines generally and allowed them to see some Aborigines as talented and capable sportspersons.

The contests between the local white teams and the settlement teams were to provide an interesting diversion to the otherwise fairly 'dull and work-orientated existence' of the local white people. Whether the involvement was the result of an acceptance by the local cricket authorities or a change of official attitude towards the team by the white officials on the settlement is unclear. Thom Blake, in a doctoral study on the settlement, was to express his opinion about the absurd contradictions which were evident:

On the one hand, the department realised the policy of isolation was a charade. While it actively encouraged inmates to leave the settlement to work in the district, it was difficult to justify preventing them leaving for a few hours to play sport. From the perspective of the white inhabitants, their attitudes generally mellowed as they came into contact with inmates out in employment. They realised, perhaps grudgingly, that their fears about being contaminated were unfounded. If they were prepared to employ Barambah inmates on their farms, it was difficult to refuse to meet them on the cricket field or football ground.\(^\text{12}\)

There was to be little evidence of open racial prejudice in the local matches and the Aboriginal team was accepted, as a white Murgon resident, Doug Goodchild, recalled:

They got on well -- the Aboriginals and the whites -- terrific really. They were great sports and never complained about ever losing. They played for the love of the game.\(^\text{13}\)

---


\(^{13}\) Doug Goodchild, personal interview, April 1990.
The players were under tremendous pressure to be on their best behaviour at all times. The 1927 Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals suggested:

Cricket and football matches with European teams in the neighbourhood are allowed, under efficient supervision, and seldom is there any complaint as to behaviour of the men.\textsuperscript{14}

The success of the Barambah cricket team was to become important to the inmates because it ‘proved’ to them that Aboriginal people were as good, if not better than, the white people on the sporting field. Former inmate, ‘Paddy’ Jerome, stated:

Sport was one area we knew we could excel in. A way to get back at the way we were treated and saw our people treated. Working sun up to sun down for tea and flour and rations.\textsuperscript{15}

There was a real pride in representing the reserve. Personal qualities may have served some role in the selection but generally ability seemed to be the over-riding criteria and selection was competitive. The achievements of the teams provided the opportunity to develop a group identity and had a unifying influence on the settlement. The settlement tribal affiliations, however, did not entirely disappear as a former inmate, Henry Collins, recalled:

When we were off the community and one bloke was in a fight you weren’t then tribal - you were Barambah. When you were back on Barambah you were back with your different groups. In sport - different groups, clans and families for different teams.\textsuperscript{16}

On the settlement children joined in the various informal cricket games on the roads or open ground. Settlement inmate, Vince Bunda, recalled how "Boys played on the road with kerosene tins and a compo ball, kerosene tin for wickets, pick handle for a bat."\textsuperscript{17}


\textsuperscript{15} Paddy Jerome, personal interview, February 1988.

\textsuperscript{16} Henry Collins, personal interview, op.cit.

\textsuperscript{17} Vince Bunda, personal interview, op.cit.
The settlement, in acting as a cheap and reliable labour source, often sent inmates out to work in disgraceful conditions and endure treatment which left them with no illusions about their real status in society. Few employers thought it necessary to provide reasonable accommodation or food beyond the most basic requirements. A young, obedient Eddie Gilbert was luckier than many and around 1919, while a farm worker at Redgate, a farming community a little distance from the settlement, he began his involvement in cricket. The Daily Mail (Brisbane) in an article said:

Cricket for a long time did not appeal to me, but I was very fond of boomerang throwing, and this helped me to develop my right shoulder and wrist. When I started playing cricket at about 15 I liked bowling, but only bowled a fairly slow ball. I practised quietly, and one day in a match at Redgate the faster ball off the pitch came suddenly to me. I noticed that by hurling my left arm high before delivery and bringing it down sharply I gave greater power to the right hand, which I brought over, at full length, with all the strength that was in me. I had a great day in that match, and the other side were out for about 50. I got most of the wickets. From that time on I kept practising...18

Doug Goodchild, a long-time resident of Murgon, was able to recall:

I first came to know Eddie Gilbert when I was about nine years old. He played in the same team as my father. He worked as a farm labourer for people named Grey at Redgate and played for the Redgate team and he played in bare feet and three-quarter length trousers and he was so fast that Redgate had to have a wicket-keeper and two long stops to stop the ball on the boundary if the wicket-keeper missed it.19

Fred Kratzmann grew up and lived in the South Burnett area for many years and recalled:

They [Aborigines] played matches in the early 1920s. He [Gilbert] was young when he started...Eddie was bowling fast and we took notice of him. I used to go with Dad before I started school. Windera home ground was about half-way to Murgon and we used to go in the sulk about 12 miles to cricket...20


19 Doug Goodchild, personal interview, op.cit.

20 Fred Kratzmann, personal interview, April 1992. Fred was born in 1914 and first played senior cricket in 1926. He played regularly and ended his career at Wellington Point in 1985.
Although Gilbert played his early games off the settlement, when he returned he continued to play. According to settlement inmate, Livingstone Chambers, an old lady used to look after Eddie Gilbert at this time. Vince Bunda said: "She was a mighty old lady. She only had one arm and she used to wash his whites - they were beautiful."\(^{21}\)

There is little doubt that Eddie Gilbert was motivated to play cricket because he was successful and enjoyed the game. No records exist of these early matches but Eddie further developed as a bowler. The agility of his movements and the accuracy of his bowling quickly brought him to the attention of local cricket officials. Mr. T. Williams, a teacher at the settlement school for a short time, "had Gilbert in his team when he captained South Burnett cricketers."\(^{22}\) Eddie Gilbert's brother Henry was also a good fast bowler but "he was never tried out [in] the local games"\(^{23}\) according to Sam Chambers.

By the time he was eighteen Eddie Gilbert had learned to bowl fast from a short run-up. Over the next few years he played cricket and further perfected his bowling as he spent hours by himself in practice. In doing so his right arm became much more developed than his left, "as a result of the force he puts into his bowling."\(^{24}\)

Eddie Gilbert received some guidance from Jack Daylight, but he was largely self-taught. The bowling action he was to develop was to prove to be most unusual for a fast bowler. It was not preceded by the usual long bowling run-up. He took a few short steps before he used his arm and body action and a very flexible wrist to generate pace. His right arm was swung through very quickly. He proved to be a 'freak' bowler because very few bowlers are capable of generating pace off such a short run-up. However, it was to be an action which placed his

\(^{21}\) Vince Bunda, personal interview, op.cit.

\(^{22}\) The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 17 September 1936: 12.

\(^{23}\) Sam Chambers, personal interview, op.cit.

\(^{24}\) Smith's Weekly, 14 February 1932: 2.
shoulder and elbow under considerable strain.

"He made a sudden bow as his long arm came over and down until his hand finished beside his left shin," someone said of his thunderbolts. "There was something flail-like in the whippy action of his forearm."

Tod Schacht recalled:

During delivery, his body faced the stumps, and, as his shoulders rolled, he doubled up with his bowling arm bringing his hand down beside his left knee.

It was a cruel, energy sapping, contortion. There was no follow through — only his right foot came up to maintain balance as he halted in about two short steps.

Although the physical attribute requirements of cricket players can vary immensely, certain racially motivated statements could be made that suggest Gilbert was a 'natural' bowler and had inherited certain qualities that gave him an advantage with his fast bowling. With regard to the prevailing racial attitudes held by white Australians, McQueen has said that

...to praise Aborigines for being good at sport is merely to comment on their physical abilities. It is very often an unconscious way of expressing their supposedly animal-like qualities. Racism thrives on making a distinction between 'primitive' and 'civilised,' where the primitive is physical, in contrast to the civilised who is intellectual.

In contrast to the view that he had an inherited advantage was the obvious fact that not all the inmates were good at cricket and a number of the Aborigines in the settlement team were slow bowlers. Gilbert was, to a certain extent, unique as a cricketer.

---

25 *Sunday Sun* (Brisbane), 8 August 1982.


Figure 1.2 Eddie Gilbert bowling.

Figure 1.3 Eddie Gilbert - grip on the ball.
Various reasons were given as to why he was able to bowl so fast. Les Stewart described him as "a ball of muscle" and a "well-made man with no fat on him." Fred Kratzmann saw him as "a spring that was wound up...a little run-up and he let himself go." Vince Bunda thought his power came not so much from his very strong arm but was transferred up from his thighs through his body. To Vince Bunda, "Gilbert was very lean, very lithe...a human bowling machine."

The simple explanation of his bowling action, as has been outlined, was that he had very flexible elbow and wrist joints, more than likely caused, in part, by his strong interest in boomerang throwing when he was younger. His wrist flexibility ('double-jointedness') would have allowed him to propel the ball with great pace from a short run.

Settlement inmate Sam Chambers remembered the effect of his bowling:

> Seen him play cricket on the settlement and break the bats and send them for a 'sixer' so he must have had some power -- strength behind him. I seen him hit a white chap called Draheim...hit him in the chest and knocked him out and they had to carry him off. All I know I got hit in the ankle from him...He didn't mean to hit me like but the ball hit me on the ankle bone...laid up for a week -- ankle all swelled up, you know. There must have been some speed on the ball..."

As well as his bowling achievements, Gilbert proved to be a good left-handed batsmen in the local level of cricket. He was to score a number of centuries at that level. When not bowling he usually fielded in the outfield.

In the early years the settlement team played locally in towns such as Murgon, Wondai and Kingaroy. Later the team was invited to travel further afield to play at places such as

---

28 Les Stewart, personal interview, op.cit.
29 ibid.
30 Fred Kratzmann, op.cit.
31 Vince Bunda, personal interview, op.cit.
32 Sam Chambers, personal interview, op.cit.
Gympie, Maryborough, Toowoomba and Ipswich. The players in the cricket and football teams became the heroes of Barambah, and Eddie Gilbert in cricket, and Frank ('Bigshot') Fisher in Rugby League, also became well-known in the surrounding South Burnett area. The exposure that sport gave to certain players, especially Gilbert, allowed them to also become recognised figures in the local area and with this came an acceptance as individuals as opposed to the usual stereotype of Aborigines. Gilbert was not an outgoing person but his cricket talents earned him the respect and admiration of his team-mates and the other inmates on the settlement. Fisher, with his flair and confidence, was recognised far and wide as a fine footballer with a "touch of class." When people talked of sport at Barambah the names of Fisher and Gilbert came to be spoken of in the same breath.

Gilbert, like other inmates, had only very narrow and controlled experiences with white people but his early dealings, both on the reserve and in the local area, would be instrumental in forming his early opinions of them. The white officials at the settlement numbered less than twenty, and, with the exception of the teaching staff, were generally characterised over the years by inefficiency and incompetence. Despite this, the staff, under the guidance of a Superintendent, were able to exert control and authority over inmates who rarely made any resistance. This settlement experience, coupled with the degrading treatment by white people outside the settlement, may well have developed the opinion among Aborigines that many white people were greedy, dominating and materialistic. The views that Gilbert held were to change over time as he grew into manhood. He was affected by various experiences as he learned from other inmates some of the 'facts of life.'

33 Doug Goodchild, personal interview, op.cit. Football (Rugby League) was the most popular activity on the settlement. Throughout the 1930s the football team was rarely beaten and had a fine reputation for skill and teamwork.
Eddie Gilbert "wasn't a 'knock-about'"\textsuperscript{34} and Vince Bunda remembered as a "person who kept to himself."\textsuperscript{35} Les Stewart, an inmate, also remembered:

He was a real gentleman. A quiet fellow -- well-spoken, well-mannered... He was really good. A good type of fellow... He could have gone anywhere amongst white or black... He lost all tribal [ways].\textsuperscript{36}

In spite of the interest in him Gilbert was not overawed by the attention as Murgon resident, Doug Goodchild, recalled:

He was a very quiet sort of a bloke. You'd get some blokes that would join in fun on the field. Eddie wasn't like that -- he wasn't reserved but he was very quiet. Never seen him do a bad sportsmanship act -- a good sportsman.\textsuperscript{37}

Along these lines Robert Crawford, who had a long association with Gilbert, was to state:

Eddie Gilbert was the fairest man I've seen play cricket. The only time he ever had a real crack at anyone was when he was a top-notcher. Never took advantage of "fill-ins." Gave "donkey drops" and they might get 45 and they'd say, "he can play Eddie Gilbert." Billy Bone could take Gilbert and stump off him.\textsuperscript{38}

Eddie Gilbert, like other team members, was expected to display an appearance and behaviour conforming to the values of white people. If not prepared for the requirements of this situation, or if the values expected were not always in keeping with those practised by their own people, then a person like Gilbert might have lacked confidence in unfamiliar situations and have become partially withdrawn. The lack of seeming involvement could lead to comments about the reserved nature of an individual and could even open him up as a target of the more confident. This in turn could lead to an inferiority complex with a dependence on others seen as having greater power. Perhaps this would appear to have been the case for Gilbert. From the viewpoint of

\textsuperscript{34} Vince Bunda, personal interview, op.cit.

\textsuperscript{35} Cyril ('Grumpy') Fisher, personal interview, op.cit.

\textsuperscript{36} Les Stewart, personal interview, op.cit.

\textsuperscript{37} Doug Goodchild, personal interview, op.cit.

\textsuperscript{38} Robert Crawford, personal interview, tape in possession of Mr. Harry Michel, Murgon. Access gained April 1990. Fred Kratzmann, personal interview, op.cit., remembered Tommy Bone, the wicket-keeper, standing "right over the wickets to Gilbert's bowling."
white people Gilbert's personal characteristics, with his uncertain actions and compliant behaviour, made him fairly acceptable. He was seen as well-behaved and suitably modest and respectful, readily able to 'accept' advice, unexcitable and even likeable. In short, he was an exception to the stereotypic Aborigine.

Gilbert was an important player in the settlement team and because of his talent certain white settlement officials accepted the role of 'guiding and directing' him. The main reason for the assistance of the authoritarian white officials was based on a genuine, paternalistic desire to see him 'looked after' and do well. The fact that Eddie Gilbert drew interest and favourable comment from outside the settlement helped to explain a greater interest taken in the settlement by the government and the white community. It resulted in a wider public appreciation of the efforts of the white people who were responsible for its efficient operation. This could only reflect favourably upon those who had some association with him. The level of involvement was to extend through to the Chief Protector of Aboriginals in Brisbane and would also include the frequent attentions of the Government Minister responsible for Aborigines, the Home Secretary.

As had been the case all of his life Gilbert was however to be given very little opportunity to learn how to deal with white people and to develop a level of responsibility and self-esteem. Over-awed as he possibly was by the various types and levels of attention he attracted, Gilbert certainly had no doubt about who was in control of the situations in which he was to find himself. This attention was to result in higher personal expectations than normal but there was little to be gained in questioning the authority or intentions of the various white officials. Although these are relevant aspects in discussing his life, it was to be on the cricket field that Gilbert held 'centre-stage' and displayed a degree of confidence, determination and assertiveness that he otherwise lacked. For a shy person like Gilbert sport was the ideal arena to create an identity.

After playing at a distant town the settlement team would pile into the back of the truck and on the way home would have a sing-song. The inmates of the settlement would always know
when the team had won a match well before they actually arrived because "the noise of their
victory songs, whistles and 'yuck-ki's' [yells] carried far."³⁹

Rita Huggins, a former resident of Barambah, recalled:

They used to go to Murgon and play cricket and out again and yell and scream.
There was no beer in those days to celebrate. It wasn't allowed on the settlement.
We knew when they won because they used to come out and yell and scream and
get the little ones and put them on the truck for a ride, but the bigger ones like me
we used to have to walk.⁴⁰

Rita Huggins also recalled how they would sing songs. One of these was 'Cheer Boys, Cheer.'

Cheer boys cheer we are from Barambah
Every game we play we try to win, try to win
We will play them all around
On our own or any ground
If they only give the Barambah boys a chance.⁴¹

The spectators joined into the spirit of the games as another resident, Eileen South, remembered:

"It was exciting, especially here when he used to play against the Murgon team. They'd be all
dancing and that. Eddie, he was so fast."⁴²

Rita Huggins described a typical scene at the cricket games:

We used to go and watch them but we were told not to go too far...it was
dangerous for the kids...We used to be racing around the field just to see them.
Sometimes when we got bigger we used to yell out to them..."C'mon uncle."
"C'mon grandfather." Most people used to go to watch the play...the old ones.
Some of them had babies and some of them would go for a walkabout. One old
lady...used to stand up on the hill and she used to be going...she had no hat on
and she'd be yelling and screaming and no one heard her.⁴³

In addition to his work and cricket, Eddie was a euphonium and trombone player in the settlement
band and would travel around to various southern Queensland localities as part of a Concert

---

³⁹ Betty MacKenzie, personal interview, op.cit.

⁴⁰ Rita Huggins, personal interview, April 1988. Despite restrictions some alcohol invariably
found its way onto the settlement and into the possession of those who wanted it and could afford it.

⁴¹ ibid.

⁴² Eileen South, personal interview, April 1988.

⁴³ Rita Huggins, personal interview, op.cit.
Party, which was under the control of Mrs. Semple, the Superintendent’s wife. From the late twenties the inmates attracted public attention with their fund-raising variety concerts. Whether these events had any role in moderating, in practical terms, the racial views of white people as they related to the Aborigines is very unlikely.

During these years Eddie Gilbert had also been courting a young lady, Edith ('Edie') Owens. Both Eddie and 'Edie' were dormitory children who had been subjected to mainly white values. Moral purity was considered important for the dormitory children. Even at this time Edith could still have been in the dormitory as older girls and young ladies were often kept there to keep them away from the influences of the camp area and to train them to be domestic servants for white people. Attempts were made to control the possibility of sexual behaviour and courtship was supervised with set times and meeting places.

When a couple wanted to become married it was only acceptable if it were done in the white way. It would have been intolerable for the white authorities to allow or recognise traditional arrangements. Even so, some scrutiny was made by the Aboriginal people to ensure that any marriages were acceptable as 'right' marriages in a traditional sense.

An Anglican Church Marriage Register relating to Cherbourg indicates that on the 9th March 1927, Eddie married Edith Owens at Murgon.\(^{44}\) 'Edie's' family originally "came from Pialba way"\(^{45}\) up at Hervey Bay and they had some association with the old Fraser Island tribe. She was born at Maryborough before she "came with [her] parents to Cherbourg as a schoolgirl"\(^{46}\) in 1920. Her father, Gary, was a stockman and her mother, Jane, had her

\(^{44}\) Anglican Church Records relating to Cherbourg, The Church of the Holy Spirit (copy in possession of Department of Community Services). Departmental records list 'Edie' as being born at Maryborough on the 29th of August 1911 and the 29th of August 1908. This last mentioned month and year were used by Eddie Gilbert during his career.


\(^{46}\) Edith Gilbert, Social History Card, Department of Community Services, 1989.
occupation listed on the Register as a domestic servant. 'Edie' was recorded as being a
'three-quarter' Aboriginal and was 20 years old when she was married. 'Edie,' like Eddie, had
"no [traditional] Aboriginal ways about her."47

Figure 1.4 Eddie and Edith Gilbert - wedding photograph.

47 Les Stewart, personal interview, op.cit.
Eddie Gilbert's occupation at the time of his marriage was listed as a painter, which seems to be the main occupation he had at the settlement over a number of years. The document also listed Eddie's parents and mentioned that his father, Anderson, was a fisherman. No occupation was listed for Alice but she may have worked on the settlement, either in the dormitory or the hospital.

Nellie Sheridan, a friend of both Eddie and Edie, remembered that "they were in the dormitory together. We were all in the dormitory together and they got married when they were there. I wasn't here when Eddie and Edie were married."  

After his marriage, and partly in recognition of his status on the settlement, Gilbert was apparently provided with one of the newly-built cottages to live in.

The list of names in a census undertaken on the settlement in 1928 makes no mention of Eddie's parents, Anderson and Alice, and nothing definite can be stated regarding their whereabouts at this time. The census listed Eddie's 'step-sister,' Effie Collins, as being a 'full-blood' who was 9 years old. The census listed Eddie's age as 24 and that of his brother Henry as 27.

During the late 1920s Eddie continued to have a good deal of success with his cricket. With this success came an even higher profile within the settlement and a greater degree of admiration and 'hero' worship by the inmates.

In September 1928 Jack Daylight, as captain of the settlement cricket team, made an application for the purchase of cricket matting for the concrete cricket pitch on which they played. This was presumably the first time this had been done and was to be an improvement

48 Nellie Sheridan, personal interview, April 1989.

49 The suggestion that Gilbert was given a new cottage is based on comments by various informants about where he lived.

50 Queensland State Archives. HOM Letter Register 1928, 3 September 1928, Letter 6718.
on existing facilities. After some departmental questioning approval was finally given for its purchase through State Stores.

Towards the end of 1928, in an event which would have a significant impact on the later life of Eddie Gilbert, Robert Crawford, a schoolteacher, arrived at Barambah. After he had been there for about eighteen months the Settlement Superintendent (Semple) asked him to help look after the sport at Barambah, a task previously undertaken by the Settlement Manager. From that time on, and especially until World War Two, Robert Crawford was to be a major force behind the successful organisation of sport at Barambah. Sam Chambers recalled how "Crawford sort of took him [Gilbert] in hand" and according to him became a major influence on his life and cricket career.

Robert Crawford was the sole selector of the teams and would take them everywhere in a truck, and was remembered by Doug Goodchild, of Murgon, as having "wonderful control over them [the inmates] and they seemed to do whatever he wanted them to do and they were very good teams." Local cricketer, Fred Kratzmann, recalled how "They [Barambah cricketers] all looked up to him and they called him ‘Mr. Crawford’ all the time...he looked after them...was a terrific man."

Although resistance to authority was rare on the settlement sport offered some opportunities to legitimately ‘react’ to the domination of white authority figures such as the Superintendent. One amusing incident from a cricket game can be seen as an example of a chance provided and taken. The story involves Frank Fisher, the champion footballer, who also played cricket.

---

51 Sam Chambers, personal interview, op.cit.
52 Doug Goodchild, personal interview, op.cit.
53 Fred Kratzmann, personal interview, op.cit.
The cricket team were playing at Goomeri. Semple would drive down after lunch to the game. Semple parked under a tree. Fisher was a bit of a 'joker.' Frank Fisher was hitting them all over the place. Up it went into the gum tree and missed the bosses' car by a few feet...he was trying to hit the car...it was a great joke...three just missed before Semple shifted.

Gilbert's early cricket career was not without some controversy, as a former player of those years, Tod Schacht, remembered:

Rumours of his ability were often wildly inaccurate. Some claimed he threw the ball and should be banned. Others contended that if he ever got to Brisbane on good turf wickets, instead of concrete, he would "cop some stick."

A few of his victims said they were pleased when they got out -- he was so fast it was almost impossible to sight the ball and he was dangerous.

Due to the bowling speed and associated successes of Gilbert a number of stories about him began to circulate on the settlement and in the local area. A former resident of Barambah, Norm ('Tolliver') Fisher, remembered a 'story' he was told about the reason for the bowling accuracy of Eddie Gilbert:

I remember that they used to say Eddie used to chase cattle over the side of the Bogey Hole. Whether the story is true or not but they reckon that when Eddie Gilbert was bowling that every cow, every cattle over there had one eye -- because Eddie was so straight he was knocking every eye out. Whether that's a true story or not I don't know but that's what they used to say -- he used to practice his accuracy.

Betty MacKenzie, daughter of Superintendent Semple, also recalled:

An incident that I remember concerning the pace of Eddie's bowling occurred during a match at the neighbouring town of Goomeri. A fast ball from Eddie hit a batsman on the thigh, setting alight a box of wax matches.

54 Robert Crawford, personal interview, op.cit.
57 Betty MacKenzie, personal interview, op.cit.
Figure 1.5 Eddie Gilbert - cricketer.
One rather ‘imaginative’ and untrue piece of information written about Gilbert was published in \textit{The Cricketer (International)} after his death. This report told how Wally Hammond, the England cricketer, had written that “Gilbert used to practice alone, with a tame monkey bringing a ball back to him.”\textsuperscript{58}

Another story told how a batsmen ducked a delivery from Gilbert but left his bat in the air, and to the amazement of all the ball hit the bat and went for a ‘six.’\textsuperscript{59} Yet another story had it that the young Eddie was so fast that when he bowled, the ball raised smoke as it hit the concrete pitch.

This fanciful idea was included many years later in the part-fact and part-fiction short story, ‘\textit{That Barambah Mob},’ by David Forrest.

We said, "Just how fast was Gilbert?"

Mr. Stulpnagel reckoned it was a hundred mile an hour.

...\textellipsis\textellipsis

We stopped writing and asked him how he knew it was a hundred miles an hour.

"You could tell," said Mr. Stulpnagel. "Mind you, I don’t know about them turf wickets, but on the concrete, you could tell."

"How?"

Mr. Stulpnagel said, "You seen tyres on the bitumen when they stand on the brakes?"

We had.

"When that ball hit the concrete," said Mr. Stulpnagel, "she’d smoke." He measured with his finger and thumb.

"You’d see this little wisp of smoke when she come at y’, comin’ like the hammers of hell. Hundred mile an hour."

We wrote that down and supposed that some blokes tried to get out of the way.

"Oh, they tried," said Mr. Stulpnagel. "Mind you," he added, "blokes like that shouldn’t take the game up."

We wanted to know whether Gilbert had scared him at all. 

"Not the first time," said Mr. Stulpnagel. "That come afterwards."\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{The Cricketer (International)}, March 1978: 33.

\textsuperscript{59} Robert Crawford, personal interview, \textit{op.cit.}

\textsuperscript{60} Cecil Hadgraft and Richard Wilson. (Editors), \textit{A Century of Australian Short Stories}. Sydney: Heinemann, 1975: 268.
A 'story' which was to be often told about Eddie Gilbert was one which was 'added' to the story by David Forrest. It became a favourite and over the years had many variations and many locations.

In one such bush match Gilbert was rocketing them down on the concrete with the wicket-keeper standing 40m behind the stumps. One ball went so fast he did not even see it.

The longstop tried to trap the ball with his coat. But, according to local accounts, it went clean through the coat, travelled another 50m, smashed through a paling fence and killed the butcher's dog on the other side.\(^6^1\)

During 1928 Jimmy Sharman, while on tour with his 'athletic and boxing show,' had called in to Barambah settlement to visit Jerry Jerome, the former Aboriginal middleweight boxer who "some 16 or 17 years ago toppled over many good fighters in sensational style."\(^6^2\) Sharman often had Aborigines in his boxing troupe but the Chief Protector in Queensland was always vigilant to ensure that no Queensland Aborigines joined.

---


\(^6^2\) *Sports Referee* (Brisbane), 20 November 1928: 10. Jerry Jerome was a popular boxer in the early part of the century and in 1912 was the first Aboriginal to become an Australian boxing champion, in the middleweight division.
After his visit Sharman wrote letters to The Referee and the Sports Referee (Brisbane). In an article which appeared in the Sports Referee (Brisbane) he wrote:

It was certainly an ‘eye-opener’ to see the buildings on the settlement, which consist of weatherboard houses for the married couples, and dormitories for both single males and females, a school, dance and picture hall, workrooms, hospital, store, &c. They also possess their own brass band, cricket team, and football team. The latter beat Maryborough last week. The cricket team, according to all reports, possesses a freak bowler in Ted [sic] Gilbert who is said to bowl a ball that is almost invisible. He is about 21 years of age, and most temperate in his habits.63

Often the superficial insights into settlement life like the one presented by Sharman were the only pieces of information the general public had about these places. There was never any attempt to raise or discuss the wider issues related to the restriction of Aborigines on reserves.

Another report appeared in The Referee in which Sharman “mentions a young aboriginal athlete as the fastest bowler in Australia.”64 The letter from Sharman to the newspaper implored that "Mr John Hutcheon, president of the Queensland Cricket Association and member of the Australian selection committee, listen to this story, and add to the prestige of his State in cricket by bringing to light this man of speed."65

Sharman also wrote:

There is plenty of most promising athletes among the aboriginals on the settlement... There is also, according to reports, another Jack Marsh there in Ted [sic] Gilbert, a splendidly built lad of about 21 years, who is the dread of all cricketers in these parts. They say he bowls so fast that the ball is almost invisible, once it hits the ground. If Australia wants a fast bowler, what’s wrong with giving this real Australian a trial? Mr. Hewitt, who is on the settlement assistant to the superintendent, and who has seen all the Internationals, tells me that if the selectors could see Gilbert in action the result would never be in doubt.66

63 ibid.
64 The Referee, 14 November 1928: 8.
65 ibid.
66 ibid.
Over the years Gilbert was to play in many local and representative matches but it would be impossible to outline all of these, especially as many records are missing. Due to this lack of surviving newspaper reports and other records it is difficult to trace the development of cricket on the settlement during the early and mid-twenties. In 1929 Barambah, under the guidance of Robert Crawford, played regularly in the Murgon and District Cricket Association competition for the first time although the settlement team had played in another competition on some basis prior to this. As far as Windera cricketer Fred Kratzmann could remember, during the 1920s the local cricket competition was more or less social and "there was no premiership attached to it."67

The first match of the 1929-30 season was reported in The Daily Mail (Brisbane):

On the wicket at Barambah Aborigines Settlement on October 6 a local coloured team decisively defeated a visiting team from Mondure by a margin of nine wickets, the scores being: Mondure, 108 and 75; Barambah, 173 and one wicket for 28. For the Aborigines, E. Gilbert bowled with extraordinary speed and accuracy, securing six wickets for 62 and four for 19. The most successful batsmen were J. Daylight 44, F. Fisher 36, and G. Willieboy 34. For Mondure, M. Burns was outstanding, securing all 10 of the aborigines wickets in their first innings (nine being clean bowled) for 79 runs, and compiling 43 and 41 with the bat. The only other Mondure player to stand up against Gilbert's bowling was J. Reilly, with 28 and 8.68

In routine correspondence to the Chief Protector by Superintendent Semple at the end of October 1929, Semple was to report:

The cricket team have been fairly successful in District Assoc: Fixtures, never losing a game. They made 417 against South Murgon and 217 for 7 wicket[s] declared against Murgon. 189 against Byee. In the matches they have made over 1100 runs and only 300 has been scored against them. The team is made to practise under white instruction twice a week after working hours.69

The last comment about training is a good example of how Semple both sought to take credit for the success of the team and also wished to display the control and obedience that was required of

67 Fred Kratzmann, op.cit.
68 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 12 October 1929: 12.
the inmates. It completely denies the initiative and enthusiasm of the players themselves. Cricket practice was usually held every afternoon and the players in the team were allowed to finish work at 4:30 p.m. provided they went to training. There was some disruption to practices when players were away from the settlement working. However, quite apart from the controls and conditions of the reserve, the players developed their own set of rules about training and some other matters to which they adhered. 70

Most of the players were ‘half-castes,’ who in earlier times were seen as a ‘low’ types of people who had inherited the worst aspects of both races. By the 1930s the half-castes, because of their lighter coloured skin and other features, were seen by many in the white community as more acceptable and more capable than full-bloods. The presence of ‘half-castes’ in the settlement cricket team partly acted as a factor to help to rationalise defeats suffered by the local white teams. The view of some of the local players was that they were good because they had a ‘bit of white in them.’ 71 The supposed ‘natural’ abilities of the inmates and the fact that they practised regularly were also offered as ‘excuses.’ These comments did not satisfactorily cover the extraordinary feats and abilities of the settlement’s lethal weapon, Eddie Gilbert.

Other than the Mondure game previously outlined the only other newspaper records that have been found about games in which Barambah played before 1930 relate to two games played towards the end of 1929. In the first match, which was played in early November, the Barambah cricket team “achieved the most significant result of the Murgon and District competition round that week when they were defeated for the first time in the season by a team from Windera.” 72

70 Robert Crawford, personal interview, op.cit.

71 Doug Goodchild, personal interview, op.cit. Doug suggested that some of the local players may have had this opinion.

72 Maryborough Chronicle, 9 November 1929: 14.
BARAMBAH V. WINDERAY.


This was the first of many matches that Winderaya player, Fred Kratzmann, would play either against or with Eddie Gilbert.

We played out at Barambah. We really enjoyed going out there. They'd [the inmates] carry on and cheer. They were good players, well-behaved blokes - all really well-dressed. They'd have their hats, white shirt, white pants and white shoes. We went in to bat and were 6 down for about 110 and old Jackie [Daylight], the captain was complaining that he'd have to take Eddie off. Eddie had about 4 or 5 wickets for just a few runs because we were getting them in byes - sundries...so Jackie had to take him off...All of the men would be behind the wicket - just about all of them. They'd have just one man in front of the wicket on the off-side probably the only one.74

In the second of the two games, Barambah played Murgon South in mid-December. In this match Barambah dropped out of first place after yet another defeat. Barambah made a total of 154 in reply to the Murgon South total of five wickets down for 173 runs. Gilbert had the bowling figures of 2 for 23.

The short story, 'That Barambah Mob,' used a great deal of licence in describing a country cricket match in which Eddie Gilbert 'played.'

73 ibid.
74 Fred Kratzmann, personal interview, op.cit.
"They give Charlie Schultz the new ball, and we run a couple of twos and a single. And so I come about t'ake strike to their other fella. Everybody started t'walk off, and I thought it must be drinks, so I started t'walk off, too."
He rolled a cigarette.

"The black bloke was standin' there and he said to me, he said, 'No, not you. You stay here.' I said, 'What's going on here?' And he said to me, he said, 'I am going to bowl to you, Mr. Stulpnagel'."

We ordered Mr. Stulpnagel a pot of Green Death.

"I stood there and I looked around, and by golly it made you feel queer. There was only the black bloke and the umpire in front of me. Ernie Vogel, he was 'keeper, he was bunched up in front of the grandstand...and the resto' them were scattered about on the fence. Every body in the stand was as quiet as anything. They was feelin' queer, too. Wonderin' what it was all about. Expect a couple of the Barambah womenfolk who were shiftin' along the stand out of the line o'wicket."

"It was so quiet you could hear the footsteps of the deep third walkin' up Taylor Street towards the powerhouse."

We felt a bit queer ourselves. We ordered Green Death.

"Then he give it to me," said Mr. Stulpnagel. "He only run about five yards and I suppose that put me off a bit. But in that last yard or two he went all streeky an' I knew I had real trouble on my hands."

We wanted to know whether he sighted it well.

Mr. Stulpnagel looked at us doubtfully.

He heard it.

"It whistled," said Mr. Stulpnagel. "You could hear it comin'."

He measured with his finger and thumb. "And there was this little wisp o'smoke when she come off the mat. That's when he give me this."

He inclined his head and we examined the tip of his ear.

There was a scar there but the letters were indecipherable.

"I'm a bit deaf in that ear," said Mr. Stulpnagel.

We thought he was lucky he wasn't clean-bowled first ball.

"It depends on what you call luck," said Mr. Stulpnagel gloomily. "He went back his five yards and he give me the next one."

Did it whistle?

"Mebbe," said Mr. Stulpnagel. "I dunno. I didn't hear nothin'. I didn't see too much, neither. I was still waiting to play it when something cracked behind me ... and all that Barambah mob started yellin' 'Howzat'."

We wrote that down.

"They took one bail at deep fine leg and there was me middle stump flat on the ground. In two bits, and some splinters."

He was silent a while and we wondered what happened to the other bail.

"You hear yarns," said Mr. Stulpnagel slowly ... He shook his head. "I dunno what happened to it. Fred Klienschmidt always reckoned the deep third took it in front of the powerhouse."

Was that possible?"75

75 David Forrest, op.cit., 268-76.
Fred Kratzmann, in giving some credibility to the incident with the bail outlined in Forrest's story, recalled how he "saw Eddie bowl Jack Lane of Murgon in a local game and the ball hit the off-stump and the bail landed over the boundary."^6

At the end of 1929 an application was made to the department for a match to be played on the settlement between the Barambah team and a local white team.\(^7\) Although it was not the first time such a match was to be played on the settlement the fact that formal approval was needed to conduct the game does illustrate the extraordinary administrative controls which were in place to 'protect' and monitor the lives of the inmates.

The highlight for the inmates was the games played at the settlement. Cyril ('Grumpy') Fisher was a spectator at many of these matches.

I knew Eddie. He was one of the fastest bowlers I've ever seen. I just remember all these people around here they stood up to Eddie when he was bowling on concrete around here then...they stood up to him. I seen him playing up here on this ground. That team they were unbeaten. A crowd of people up there in those days at the grounds up here. Black people used to go up there sit down for dinner and go back up again and watch it. They were very good. They had their cricketing gear on -- outfit, it was really good. They used to practice up in the old Showground up there. They just played for the sport of it and won every game.\(^8\)

Barambah did not win the premiership during the 1928-29 season but this was to precede a decade of very successful results in local cricket competitions. The achievements of the cricket team engendered a greater level of pride in the inmates as they struggled to develop a sense of identity and purpose under the restrictions imposed by the reserve system.

During 1929 word of Eddie Gilbert's bowling prowess was to reach the cricket officials of the Queensland Cricket Association. Some of the performances which brought him under the notice of the Q.C.A. were "six for 15 against Kilkivan, and seven for 28 against Wondai, both

6 Fred Kratzmann, op.cit.

7 Queensland State Archives. Register of Letters, HOM/J, 1929.

8 Cyril ('Grumpy') Fisher, personal interview, op.cit.
neighbouring places to Barambah. His bowling average during the 1929-30 season was around five runs per wicket with his bowling being reported as being so fast that the fieldsmen often had "extreme difficulty in following the ball from bat to hand."

Figure 1.7 'Is He a Bowling Find?'

---

79 The Referee, 10 December 1930: 19.

At the end of November 1929, Superintendent Semple wrote to the Secretary of the Queensland Cricket Association, Mr. R. Stephens.

Dear Mr. Stephens,

I have been asked by the Chief-Protector to send the fast bowler of this district, an aboriginal named Edward Gilbert to Brisbane to be given a trial. In the district association his average as a bowler is as follows, 126 overs 23 maidens, 291 runs taking 48 wickets. His highest score is 217 not out. He has been mentioned in the Brisbane press.

I have another Aboriginal named Claudie Willieboy his batting average is 3 and his bowling is, 27 overs 2 maidens, 42 runs taking 8 wickets he is used as a change bowler only he is a forceing [sic] left hand batsman and bowler[.]

I believe the cricket association is asking for Gilbert but would like if you would phone Mr. Bleakley The Chief Protector of Aboriginaels and speak to him the Phone no is 3820 Cent.

These boys are self taught and of course have only batted on concrete wickets with Kippax Matting, it is their natural keenness of sight that makes them good cricketers[.] With a little I am sure they would prove excellent men[.] As for fielding the Boy [sic] Gilbert could not be excelled.

I have a very good Aboriginal team and are top in the District Assoc. Fixtures. If they could only practise on a turf wicket I would challenge one of your 2nd. grade teams[.] As it is I expect to play Gympie at or about Xmas.

Should you care to come up both Mrs. Semple and I would be pleased to see you. I am sure you [would] thoroughly enjoy your visit.

With Kindest regards

W Porteus Semple. (Signature)

In the race relations’ climate of the thirties, and despite the fact that an Aborigine (Albert Henry) had played cricket for Queensland in the mid-1900s, there may have been some reluctance by the

---

81 Queensland Cricket Association Archives, letter dated 1929. It is interesting to outline future events in the life of the cricketer (Claude Willieboy) mentioned in the article. By 1932 Willieboy was at Woorabinda Settlement. He was placed under a removal order to Palm Island for being "impossible, incorrigible, dangerous." He absconded from Palm Island to Maryborough but was arrested and returned. (Photocopy of Register of Removals 1908-1934, in Library of F.A.I.R.A., Brisbane.) Willieboy died of tuberculosis at Cherbourg on the 20th August 1934.
Queensland Cricket Association (Q.C.A.) to actively seek an Aboriginal cricket talent. However, as a result of lobbying by Semple and others, arrangements were made in February 1930 for Gilbert, "who has been creating a stir in the Barambah district, to be brought to Brisbane to enable him to show his prowess." The 'try-out' was to occur at the Exhibition Ground nets. Eddie Gilbert was accompanied on his trip by an official of the Barambah settlement, Mr. Watkins.

Of his recent performances 'Cover Point,' the cricket writer for the Sports Referee (Brisbane) was to claim, sensationally:

I am told that in one fixture in which he took part recently he scored 207 [217] not out with the bat, bowled five of the opposition, and "laid out" four others. The injuries to some of the men were so serious that the ambulance from the nearest town had to be brought out to the settlement.

Gilbert arrived in Brisbane after "having to sit up in the train during Monday night." He appeared at the nets on Tuesday afternoon. Here a small number of officials of the Queensland Cricket Association, and a couple of reporters and others, gathered to see him bowl. Ray Evans, who wrote a biography of Gilbert for the Australian Dictionary of Biography, described his bowling action:

Here they witnessed his disarmingly laconic approach to the bowling crease - an ambling six or seven short paces - followed by a delivery of bewildering force, velocity and precision. Equally misleading was his small 5' 7" stature and his slight, nine stone frame. For this modest build disguised a physique of solid muscle, a reach of some 4" beyond the normal and a whip-like wrist action which released a cricket ball like a stone from a catapult.

82 Sports Referee (Brisbane), 1 March 1930: 18.
83 ibid.
84 ibid.
The March 1st edition of the *Sports Referee* (Brisbane) reported how Eddie was to cause a minor sensation at the net trial:

The first player against whom he bowled was hit severely on the left forearm, and he is still carrying the mark of the ball. The second player endeavoured to prevent similar occurrences, but could not get away far enough to avoid at least minor hits. The third batsman who faced Gilbert played his first two balls, but the third hit him in the midriff and sent him writhing to the pitch. All seemed convinced that the aboriginal bowler had plenty of pace.ُ

State player of the time, Gordon Amos, was one of the batsmen.

I was the first 'fella' to bat against him in the nets at Exhibition Ground number 2...Eddie bowled at me -- no sight-screen. Oh crikey!, you could hardly see the ball coming. I hit him across the ground and he hit me up here (on body). [Laugh] He was quick.*^*

Following the trial, and in summarising the possibilities of Eddie Gilbert, ‘Cover Point,’ of the *Sports Referee* (Brisbane), was to enthusiastically suggest:

Eddie Gilbert impressed one as a man with many possibilities. He takes a short run, delivers the ball from directly over his head, and gathers great pace off the pitch. He makes the ball swing across the wicket most awkwardly from off to leg. He is certainly a bowler of possibilities, and one of a type different from those who are at present figuring as fast bowlers in first-class cricket. His run up to the wicket needs to be carried higher than he at present carries it in delivering the ball. But there is no doubt that he is a bowler. I am convinced, too, that with proper coaching he could develop into a good batsman. He has a number of quite good shots on the off side, but he is weak on the leg and draws away. These things, however, can be cured. Here is a player who should, in my opinion, be brought down for the Country Carnival next season.ُ

The article concluded by mentioning that in recent years "no aboriginal player has been prominent in first-class games."ُ

Immediately after his trial Eddie Gilbert was to return to Barambah and resume playing cricket and "doing great things on the concrete wickets on which the fixtures of the South Burnett

---

86 *Sports Referee* (Brisbane), 1 March 1930: 18.

87 Gordon Amos, personal interview, September 1991.

88 ibid., 18.

89 *Sports Referee* (Brisbane), 1 March 1930: 18.
Cricket Association are played. His brief encounter with the white world in Brisbane was over for the time. The *Sports Referee* (Brisbane) carried the article already outlined above as well as a photograph of Eddie with the caption: 'Is He a Bowling Find?'

Towards the end of March 1930 *The Alert* (Maryborough) reported on a match between Maryborough and the South Burnett. The South Burnett team, including Gilbert, was late in arriving by train and the game started at noon. Maryborough won the toss and elected to bat.

"Mick" Gees accompanied his skipper to the creases as opening batsmen, and when the boomed lightning bowler of the Burnett, E. Gilbert, was handed the ball by his captain the fans sat up to see what would happen. He’s fast, but there has been dozens of others faster, and to claim that he is as fast as Henry is, to put it mildly, "setting the pace beyond reason." His direction, too, is all at fault, but perhaps turf wickets make the difference.

Maryborough compiled 203 of which Nothing made 75 in an effort which "showed both patience and aggressiveness." Underwood’s slow bowling accounted for 4 for 67 while Gilbert failed to take a wicket. With an impossible task of obtaining the required runs in just over an hour South Burnett commenced their innings. When stumps were drawn they had made 4 for 64 with the top-score being Underwood, with 25, not out. The best of the Maryborough bowlers was Werder, who captured 2 for 28.

---

90 ibid.

91 ibid.

92 *The Alert* (Maryborough), 28 March 1930.

93 ibid.

Former Windera cricketer, Fred Kratzmann, was fairly certain that a Murgon representative team played in Gympie around Easter time in 1930.

The first rep. match I played in we played on a concrete pitch at the One Mile at Gympie and we had four long stops [for Eddie] — men spread around and that ball was going up in the mullock heaps [mine tailings] all the time — you couldn’t block them all you know. I mean he was that fast.°

On the 23rd of September 1930, the Chief Protector of Aboriginals (Bleakley) was notified that Eddie Gilbert was selected to play in a country cricket team in the Q.C.A’s Country Week to be held in Brisbane in mid-October. In previewing this carnival The Referee newspaper suggested that "the aboriginal fast bowler from Barambah, is bound to attract attention."°

In early October, Gilbert played in a match in the local Kilkivan-Wondai competition that the settlement team was now in. It was reported in the Maryborough Chronicle:

A splendid game resulted in a win for Barambah by 51 runs on the first innings. A feature of the game was the magnificent display of the young aboriginal, Eddie Gilbert. He scored 61 runs out of his side’s 128. He displayed shots all round the wicket, but it was his bowling that carried the day. He bowled with terrific pace and quickly had the batsmen in difficulties, finishing up with an average of seven wickets for 23, the only man who played him with any confidence being the veteran, J. Baxter, who carried his bat for 29, not out.

This will probably be Gilbert’s last game in the Association, as he has received an appointment on the ground staff of the Q.C.A. and will also be appearing in country week cricket."°

Just before the Country Carnival it was suggested that good judges expected Gilbert to be an asset to the State.° He was considered to be not as fast as current State player Thurlow, but "he gets more pace off the pitch than the Queensland express, and swings from the off to the leg."°

° Fred Kratzmann, personal interview, op.cit.
°° The Referee, 1 October 1930: 19.
°°° Maryborough Chronicle, 11 October 1930: 12.
°°°° The Referee, 8 October 1930: 18.
°°°°° ibid.
The selection of Eddie was to cause some concern with regard to his accommodation.

The Referee ran a story on this.

**Abo. Housing Problem.**

A peculiar position arose when Eddie Gilbert, of the Barambah Aboriginal Station, near Gayndah, was chosen to play in the Country Carnival at Brisbane this week. The Chief Protector of Aborigines would not allow Gilbert to go unless someone looked after him. Eventually a member of the Q. Cricket Association executive, who lives at Sandgate, took on the job, and will accommodate Gilbert in a tent in his backyard during his stay. Here Eddie will be closely guarded from the alluring distractions of the big city in between his activities.\(^{100}\)

The member of the Q.C.A. executive referred to was Mr. Len Allen. This gentleman would soon have a significant impact on Eddie Gilbert's early career. Gilbert stayed in the Allens' house and did not sleep in the tent in the back-yard, as was rumoured at the time, and later was accepted as fact.

Eddie Gilbert came under the control of the Aboriginal Protection Act. As part of the power of this Act an Aborigine could not leave the settlement until permission had been granted by the Superintendent. Information required included

\[
\text{...reasons for leaving, the expected date of return, where and with whom one would be staying with, the means of travel, amount of money involved for the entire trip would be gathered by the manager for his final decision on whether permission could be granted or not.}^{101}\]

The regulations would have gladly been 'bent' to allow Gilbert to make the most of his opportunities in cricket and the offer of accommodation by Len Allen overcame any problems.

In perfect weather conditions Eddie Gilbert played for North Country in a 12 a-side match against South Country at the Exhibition Ground. Despite North Country establishing their superiority over their opponents the match was drawn, with Souths having two men unconquered

\(^{100}\) *ibid.*, 22 October 1930: 27.

when play was abandoned owing to failing light in their second innings.\textsuperscript{102} 

North Country compiled 309 runs in their first innings and South Country replied with a meagre total of 152. North batted steadily and cautiously during their innings and Bourne played attractively for 64, while Weir was sound in compiling 53. Gilbert batted "with great vigour, and, although he was tenth man in he showed good style in contributing 27, before being bowled by Jago."\textsuperscript{103} South used six bowlers with the best averages being Noonan with 3 wickets for 42. In the South total Cooper compiled 60 runs. Bowling for North, Pizzey (Bundaberg) took 6 wickets for 43 runs from 7.7 overs, while, "contrary to expectations, Gilbert's bowling provided little perplexities"\textsuperscript{104} to the batsmen. He finished with 2 wickets for 47 runs, from 13 overs, including 3 maidens.

In the second innings North amassed a total of 1 for 193 declared. This included the outstanding feature of the match which was "the stand made by Sides, the 16 year-old Townsville batsmen who compiled 104."\textsuperscript{105} Culliton took the only wicket to fall at a cost of 33 runs. 
When South batted again Eddie Gilbert and Lord opened the bowling attack for North in the second innings and Gilbert had Watt bowled out for one on his sixth ball. He later bowled Culliton for no score. When play was called off in the second innings South were 10 for 171. Watt top-scored with 31 runs. The second innings saw Gilbert bowl 9 overs, including 3 maidens, and he took 2 wickets for 34. Other bowlers to take wickets were Pizzey, who took 3 for 52 and Driscoll, who returned the figures of 3 for 20.

A day later Gilbert was included in the Country team to play a Metropolitan Colts team. The game was to end in victory for the country players, who won by 161 runs on the first innings.

\textsuperscript{102} The Brisbane Courier, 22 October 1930: 5.

\textsuperscript{103} ibid.

\textsuperscript{104} ibid.

\textsuperscript{105} ibid.
after Metropolitan Colts had scored 139 runs.

Eddie Gilbert was to play a decisive role in this game:

Gilbert, the whirlwind ebony trundler from the Murgon district, was a decided factor in creating a gloomy outlook for the metropolitan colts at the close of their innings in the match against the Country team, on No. 2 wicket at the Exhibition Ground yesterday. Gilbert, whose average was six wickets for 29 runs, was ably seconded in his attack by J. Pizzey (Bundaberg), whose bowling average was four for 51.\(^\text{106}\)

Gilbert and Jago opened the bowling for Country, and Eddie Gilbert’s first five overs, which included two maidens, cost only seven runs. The last three of the eleven wickets to fall were taken by Gilbert, with “Duncan and O’Sullivan being sent to the right-about by him with consecutive balls in his second last over.”\(^\text{107}\) Seven of Eddie Gilbert’s 14 overs were maidens. Top-scorer for Colts was Biggs with 50.

In their turn at bat the Country team put together a total of 309. Burns top-scored for Country with 67 runs. Gilbert’s contribution was just 4 runs before he was caught by Lynch off the bowling of Harding.

\(^{106}\) ibid., 23 October 1930: 5.

\(^{107}\) ibid.
The success of Gilbert during the Country Week matches provided a problem for Cricket officials in giving him the recognition he undoubtedly deserved. Tod Schacht recalled:

In baseball terms Gilbert had two strikes against him.

Firstly, he came from the bush, and to select him in preference to an up-and-coming young fast bowler from the city, of good family and background, was a difficult choice for them in those bygone years.

The other problem was his colour!

Eddie was very black — a true Aborigine in physique and culture.

Given a chance in the city Gilbert soon proved that most of the top players had difficulty handling really fast bowling.

To the dismay of their own supporters, some batsmen were seen pulling away from their stumps as the ball sped toward them.\(^{108}\)

Based on his performances it was fitting that Eddie Gilbert was selected to represent Queensland in the Colt's match versus New South Wales at the Exhibition Ground to be held on the Friday, Saturday and Monday after Country Week. A total of nine country players, including the twelfth man, gained selection in this team, and this made it "impossible to carry out the planned match, Country versus B and C grades, which had been set down for Friday and Saturday at Nundah."\(^{109}\) This engagement had to be cancelled and a combined match between Gough's team and Oxenham's team was held in its place.

---


\(^{109}\) ibid.
Special interest had been taken in the bowling of Gilbert during the week. The Telegraph (Brisbane) developed this level of curiosity and gave a fairly astute assessment of his performance:

The bowling of E. Gilbert, the aborigine from Barambah, has caused something of a sensation. Earlier in the week when he bowled without cricket boots there was talk of his being faster, or as fast, as some of the most famous fast bowlers of our time. When he was hobbled in cricket boots, however, his pace slowed down to medium fast. Nevertheless, he took six of the metropolitan colts’ wickets for 29 runs. His length and direction are both good, but his great wicket-getting capacity seems to come from his ability to make the pace off the pitch. He seems to be best when bowled for about four overs and then rested. A peculiar feature of his performance is his ability to revive his pace when his bowling meets with success. A few wickets makes him bowl 25 per cent better than he otherwise would do. Whether he is a champion is a question which must be left for time to decide, but the general impression is that he is not a great deal more than a fairly good bowler. Of his general ability there can be no question. If he really makes good as a bowler the selectors will have to consider other aspects besides cricket before selecting him for a trial in Sheffield Shield cricket. He would certainly be a curiosity on a southern tour.110

‘Cover Point,’ of the Sports Referee (Brisbane), also reviewed the Country Week matches:

There can be no room for doubt that the standard of cricket in the country centres of Queensland is improving by leaps and bounds. We have never seen better play from country players, taken as whole, than has been shown by the elevens which figured in the matches in the metropolis in the past week. The men who have displayed first-class cricketing ability have come from all parts of the State. One is, therefore, led to believe that there is a general all-round improvement in the standard of play.111

With regard to the performance of Eddie Gilbert it was written:

He is very fast off the pitch and with his short run he is apt to catch the best of batsmen unawares. He is a modest young player and is very keen in all his work on the field. In the country matches his ten wickets cost little more than ten runs apiece, and, with some judicious advice offered now and then, they would have cost considerably less. He has proved himself a bowler of distinct promise.112

Because of his recognised success Gilbert’s character was now to become of some considerable interest to a sceptical but intrigued public. They were already made aware of his “unorthodoxy,

110 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 24 October 1930: 4.

111 Sports Referee (Brisbane), 25 October 1930: 12.

112 ibid. “Gilbert...is said to develop remarkable pace. Will he develop remarkable pace. Will he. That remains to be seen.” The Sporting Globe, 29 October 1930: 8.
his never failing determination, and his undoubted skill,"¹¹³ but more than likely it was to be
information about Eddie Gilbert, the person, that would ultimately determine the level of his
acceptability and the degree of his popularity. The presentation of a wholesome and positive
image of Gilbert needed to be handled by the press in a certain way if his cricket career was to
continue. So, in addition to his sporting achievements articles began to appear about Gilbert’s
caracter and personal life.

No doubt aware of this, The Referee published an article which said:
The controller of the settlement cannot speak too highly of Gilbert. There is no
arrogance or vanity about him, and when first brought to Brisbane for the Colt’s
match against New South Wales he was diffident about mixing with white
cricketers. But the companionable way he has been treated by them since has
worn off a good deal of his natural shyness."¹¹⁴

Gilbert was described by one sports-writer “as serious minded, well conducted and quiet.”¹¹⁵

Eddie, an Angtican, was described as an ardent church-goer and this aspect was
commented on:

...Eddie is deeply religious, and does his level best to live up to the teachings of
the Church. One morning Mr. Allen was doing a little gardening when
something when [went] wrong and an expletive slipped out. Eddie happened to
be near, and he remarked, in all seriousness, that he was surprised to hear Mr.
Allen swear."¹¹⁶

Despite the reporting of these aspects at this time it was the Colt’s match with New South Wales
that was of immediate concern to Gilbert. In this match New South Wales won by six wickets
after an interesting game. Scoring was to prove to be consistent, the Queensland Colts making
216 and 238, and New South Wales 245 and 213 for 4 wickets.

¹¹³ The Referee, 10 December 1930: 19.
¹¹⁴ ibid.
¹¹⁵ Truth (Melbourne), 8 February 1975: 35.
¹¹⁶ ibid.
Biggs won the toss for Queensland and elected to have use of a hard, fast wicket. Cooper top-scored with 58. Hunt, a medium-pace left-hander, proved to be the chief 'destroyer' for New South Wales, taking four wickets for 37, while Hird "with his slowish, queerly-delivered balls, got three for 66." Although the New South Wales batting line-up appeared to be very formidable, results did not prove it to be so. At the end of the first day they were 4 wickets down for 112, of which Parsonage had scored 46. Eddie Gilbert bowled very fast at times and had Parsonage "well taken on the leg side at the wickets, and also got Leadbeater l.b.w."

The next day Hogg and Harris resumed the New South Wales innings. These two batsmen "commenced brightly, and, playing Gilbert and Yeates with confidence, knocked up 20 runs off the first five overs." Gilbert was bowling "an excellent length and maintaining plenty of pace," and was rewarded with Hogg’s wicket when a ball kept low. Later Gilbert bowled one over to Henderson who "did not see six balls, and snicked the seventh, which Watt at second-slip took on the rebound." He also bowled top-scorer Cummins for 60 after Cummins had driven him twice in succession to the fence earlier in his innings.

Of his bowling the Sports Referee (Brisbane) concluded:

Bowling with great pace, with nip from the pitch and with splendid length, E. Gilbert, the aboriginal cricketer from the Barambah settlement, to-day strengthened his claims to inclusion in the Queensland Shield side by taking six wickets for 82.

117 The Brisbane Courier, 26 October 1930: 6.

118 ibid.


120 ibid.


Eddie's 6 wickets were taken in 20 overs (with 2 maidens). He had two catches taken off his bowling and "he hit the stumps three times and had another victim l.b.w."

Gilbert had his share of bad luck when three catches were dropped by fieldsmen off his bowling and he had a particularly confident appeal for l.b.w. turned down. The New South Wales total was 245, leaving Queensland 29 runs behind. The Queensland sides' second innings went badly and at one stage they were 8 for 166. A ninth-wicket stand between Pizzez and Yeates caused "a great outburst of cheering when they carried the score to 200 without being separated." The partnership was broken in the first over of the last day when Yeates was caught at fine leg without adding to his score of 39. Pizzez followed shortly after and the innings closed at 238. Eddie Gilbert was not out on one. Biggs was to be the highest scorer in this innings with 65. His was "a chanceless display and embraced many samples of his favourite stroke, a beautiful cover drive."

For New South Wales the bowling honours went to Stewart, who, although erratic at times, ended up with 6 for 67.

New South Wales required 210 runs to win as they began their second innings. They had a poor start and Josselyn, Parsonage and Leadbeater were back in the pavilion with the score on 35. One of these, Josselyn, was batting with a painful arm, the result of a hit from one of Gilbert's fast bowls. The batsmen set about their task and scored the last 97 runs in an hour. Cummins completed a sound match when he scored his 58. Eddie Gilbert skinned his toes by wearing spiked cricket boots for the first time and was less difficult to handle in the second innings. It was reported that, "Once he took his boots off, but an umpire told him to put them on

---

123 The Brisbane Courier, 27 October 1930: 7.
125 ibid.
126 ibid.
He was treated with more severity than in the first innings, and finished without a wicket, though there was no doubt he had Josselyn lbw. His final bowling figures were 11.5 overs, 1 maiden, no wicket for 48. He took one catch while fielding at first slip.

The match ended around 3 p.m. on the last day (Monday), with New South Wales winning by 6 wickets and three runs. The match proved to be of advantage to the cricket of both States and helped to bring "Eddie Gilbert and M. Biggs to the front for Queensland." The high reputation that Gilbert had earned previously in the Country matches was enhanced by his performance in this match.

There was also interest in his performance for other reasons.

The manager of the New S.W. Colts' team (Mr. H.V. Tanner), interviewed at the conclusion of the match, said he was surprised at the interest being shown in Gilbert the aborigine. "He is a fine bowler," said Mr. Tanner, "and he really worried our batsmen. We would very much like to see him in Sydney."

At the grounds to-day there was some difference of opinion about Gilbert's action. Some old cricketers are of the opinion that if Gilbert does not throw the ball his action approximates to it. Mr. Tanner declares that there is nothing wrong with Gilbert's action. "It is quite fair," he says, "and I think that some people must be confusing the turn of the wrist with the elbow action when they say that he throws. I have no doubt about his action, which I think is perfectly fair."

During the game Gilbert undoubtedly proved himself to be a good fast bowler and was being freely tipped to be included in the State Sheffield Shield team. The Brisbane Courier suggested that his prospects "are considered to be particularly bright." The Telegraph (Brisbane) was to report:

---


129 *The Gympie Times*, 28 October 1930: 5.

The probability of Gilbert being asked to travel south with the Queensland team is being widely discussed. It all depends of course on his success in the present match. If he does make good, and there seems little doubt that he will, the selectors must be tempted to send him away, if for no other than financial considerations. His appearance in Sydney and Melbourne would have a tremendous effect on gate receipts. Before Gilbert could go, however, proper provision would have to be made for his proper care and supervision. The Queensland cricket authorities would have to appoint some person or persons responsible for his welfare. The rules and regulations governing the control have made no contingency, but it is plainly stated that if any person or persons take an aborigine out of the State proper monetary guarantees must be forthcoming to ensure his proper return to Queensland and to cover any money which may be due to him for wages, &c.\[131\]

The article went on to point out that it was 29 years since an Aborigine (Albert Henry) had played first-class cricket in Queensland and

...in that time there has come a change in the general outlook on the colour question. In spite of prejudices which may have grown up in that time, however, there are many good reasons why Gilbert should not be excluded solely on this ground.\[132\]

The Truth (Brisbane) newspaper believed that Gilbert was a ‘certainty’ and in regard to the Colts match thought he was "the bowler of the side, and his performance was excellent."\[133\] Eddie Gilbert, the paper believed, was something ‘new’ in that "he seems well imbued with the idea that the sticks are there to be hit."\[134\] The Bulletin outlined the hopes of Queensland with the statement that "a fast bowler of quality has at last been vouchsafed."\[135\]

\[131\] The Telegraph (Brisbane), 31 October 1930: 12.

\[132\] ibid.

\[133\] Truth (Brisbane), 26 October 1930: 1.

\[134\] ibid.

\[135\] The Bulletin, 29 October 1930: 40.
Dear Mr. Semple,

I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter for which I thank you, and I join with you all in your rejoicings re the inclusion of Eddie Gilbert in the Queensland "Colts" and Sheffield Teams. I feel sure that when he left yours, you did not anticipate that he would gain representative honours so soon, but he has been shrewd enough to take my advice all through since he came to Brisbane with the result that he retains his own style of bowling. While speaking of that, I would be glad if you will see that no person endeavours to alter his run to the wicket or try to make him take a longer run, because that is where he meets with his success. I receive your thanks for looking after him during his stay, and I can assure you that he is a very well behaved and good mannered young man. I have taken him to pictures and theatres, and introduced him to all my friends who speak very well indeed of him. The papers have been writing him up all the time, and everybody must agree that they have been most fair with their comments. Of course I have always hit with the press in Brisbane, and I was personally responsible for quite a lot that was written. Both Mrs. Allen and myself have decided in the event of him being chosen to play again for Qld. we will house him with us, so that you need never have any trouble in that respect. While I was not anxious to incur any expense on his behalf, I availed myself of your kindness and purchased for him, a pair of boots, flannel trousers and woollen socks. Those articles were absolutely necessary for him when playing in big cricket, and I would suggest that you keep his flannels for his next visit to Brisbane and allow him to use his ordinary whites for cricket in Murgon. I made him a present of the sand shoes that he has with him, and whatever other monies I have spent on him during his stay with us has given me great pleasure to be able to do so for I feel sure you appreciate same. He has quite a number of photos with him, and they will be his proud possessions I feel sure. As regards accounts for washing etc. please forget them, but Mrs. Allen is worrying herself that he will be taking some dirty clothes home with him, which of course you will quite understand is quite unavoidable seeing that he is playing cricket up to the last moment. I paid the Chief [Protector] the cost of his train fare to and from Murgon, which I trust was in order. Eddie desires me to accept from him a shield and walking stick with a snake entwined and he has also promised to forward two Boomerangs, one for Mr. Stephens and the other for Mr. Ernie Hutcheon the Selector. Should you be coming to town he asks would you kindly bring same along with you, but although Eddie assures me that the gifts will not cost him anything, I would be grateful if you will debit any expense he should incur in securing these articles to me. I very much regret that I am unable to be present when he arrives back at the mission for I can foresee what a wonderful reception he is going to receive. I sincerely trust that I will have the pleasure of meeting you again in Brisbane when we will be able to discuss matters appertaining to cricket generally. Lest I forget, you will note that Eddie as his State Blazer and cap, and the pocket with the Q. Colts on it, should I feel certain look well in a frame. Personally I feel sure that he will be invited to play for Qld. against N.S.W. at the
end of this month, so that when he leaves at the conclusion of this match I will
only say Au Revoir [sic]. In conclusion, I wish to convey my sincere
congratulations to you for having such a cricketer on your station, and also for the
excellent schooling you have given Gilbert as shown by his manners and
behaviour while staying with us.

Kind regards.

Len A. Allen (Signature).\(^{136}\)

---

Despite a fair degree of benevolent paternalism in the comments of Len Allen it is obvious that a good relationship had developed between he and Eddie Gilbert. Len Allen was to act "as a sort of guide, philosopher, and friend to Gilbert." In interviews Allen and his wife were to speak "highly of the boy's conduct and manners in the house." In an undisguised racist comment that was designed to further impress on people that Gilbert was 'different' was the reported comment by Allen who declared: "He is in a class of his own as aboriginals [sic] go."

It was no great surprise when the Queensland Sheffield Shield team was chosen just after the Colts match and Eddie Gilbert was included. However, 'Long-On,' the cricketing writer for The Brisbane Courier, believed that "Gilbert's preferment to Amos probably is in the nature of a thorough try-out prior to selecting the team to tour the Southern States." In its discussion on the selection of the State team the Truth (Brisbane) had suggested that "the old war horse Amos will also be knocking at this particular door, owing to his well-known ability to bowl all day, his keen fielding, and his occasional flashes with the bat."

---

137 The Referee, 10 December 1930: 19. Individuals will often take guidance and receive support from various people. The key difference with Gilbert was his apparent inability to assume the necessary level of independence and self-responsibility to control his own destiny.

138 Ibid.

139 Ibid.

140 The Brisbane Courier, 26 October 1930: 6.

141 Truth (Brisbane), 27 October 1930: 6.
Gordon Amos, considered by some to be consistently quicker than Gilbert, was to practice with the State team. He thought that Gilbert was "clean, well-behaved and a little bit 'retiring.'”

For no special reason, other than the novelty of the event, he was to recall:

One little funny thing with me. We were on the Exhibition Ground practising on number 2. They used to have the showers and everything for the players in under the front of the MacDonald Stand. Anyway, I'd been out practising and I thought I'd better go in and have a shower, so I went and I hear the water running in there. I went down and here's Eddie standing under the shower. I couldn't see him he was black. [Laugh] It was dark in the room.

The selection of Gilbert, based as it was on his consistent performances for the Country and Queensland Colts' teams, proved to be a popular one. In discussing the lack of an openly hostile racist campaign against the selection of Gilbert the Queensland Figaro was to suggest:

He is a quiet, well mannered, intelligent little chap, and not one critic has been heard to cavil at his selection, which is something to be wondered at, especially when it is remembered the number of self-styled cricket critics which abound in this State. Gilbert will be the first "dinkum Australian" to appear in a Queensland representative team since the days of the sensational speed bowler, Henry.

The choice of Gilbert for the State team was of great interest to cricket followers all over Australia, as an article appearing in The Daily Mail (Brisbane) indicated:

Every spotlight in Australian cricket is focussed on Eddie Gilbert, the aborigine, who is to play for Queensland against South Australia on Friday. Some cricketers would revel in the praise that is being given to Gilbert since his sensational performances with the ball during country week and against the New South Wales colts [sic]; the dazzle of it all would go to their heads; but Gilbert is not such a one. He does not like the glare of publicity. When, through the courtesy of Mr. Len Allen, who is sponsoring and quartering Gilbert during Gilbert's stay in Brisbane, a representative of the Daily Mail was introduced to the Barambah bowler in Edward-street yesterday, Eddie scowled, and it quickly became apparent that the usual run of questions would only worry and befog him. By a happy turn of fate the interviewer quickly got on good terms with Gilbert. No more than a casual word was said as Mr. Allen was conducting Gilbert up Edward-street to show him over the Railway Institute, but rounding the corner into Turbot-street suddenly a dog crossed the street from the direction of the

142 Gordon Amos, personal interview, op.cit.
143 ibid.
144 The Queensland Figaro, 1 November 1930: 1.
Brisbane gymnasium.
"Kelpie," said the interviewer.
"Half-bred kelpie!" replied Gilbert with hostile accents. Mr. Allen whistled to the
dog, and Gilbert examined him.
"Drover's dog," declared Eddie.
"Good-looking sheep dog." That started the interview.
Gilbert immediately became friendly.\textsuperscript{145}

Despite the condescending tones and subtle racism in the comments there was a great deal of
interest shown in Eddie Gilbert by the newspapers. Following on from earlier interest the popular
press were to play an important part in convincing a fascinated, but sceptical and racist
readership, that an Aborigine should be involved in first-class cricket. Considering the extent of
racist sentiment evident in the community, it was a cause of annoyance to many to have an
Aborigine achieve success at cricket. Before Gilbert could become acceptable to the public great
pains had to be taken to ensure that he was seen to reflect appropriate white values.

The press had always played a key role in relation to outlining racial ideas and beliefs for
the average person. These were often reflected in the stories, cartoons and general reporting.
Evidence of bias existed where certain editors and papers presented particular racist points of
view. Out of this general type of reporting suddenly emerged a young Aboriginal sportsman who
created interest. The support of the press was a positive influential factor on Gilbert and his first-
class cricket career.

Most of the papers were only too happy to play up the novelty value offered by Gilbert
and this, in all probability, caused a level of jealously and resentment amongst certain players in
the State team. This attention may have been particularly annoying to some players because they
harboured deeply entrenched racist views.

The \textit{Daily Mail} (Brisbane) was to comment how observers "have marvelled at the
tremendous pace off the pitch that the aborigine gets from a ball bowled with the delivery of the

\textsuperscript{145} The \textit{Daily Mail} (Brisbane), clipping in personal file of Eddie Gilbert, inclusion 06692, 31
October 1930.
average slow bowler. Under the sub-heading of, 'IS WHITE IN HEART,' the article said:

When asked why he did not employ the pitch more to make the ball kick up, Gilbert replied, "I don't like hitting batsmen. I was very sorry for Josselyn. I did not mean to hit him. I do not try to bring the ball up, but want always to go straight through, depending on my pace and straightness to get wickets. At times my ball gets a natural swing, and often when bowling over the wicket I swing out to leg quite a lot, but I cannot tell you when this will happen. I have not yet learned to control the swing in the air like some bowlers can. I believe in the straight ball with all the pace that is possible for me to get in it. This ball is my best wicket-getter.

ACTION OF A CATAPULT.

Gilbert considers that much of his success is due to his abnormal reach. He has a tremendously long arm. Spanned his reach from tip to tip measures a shade over 70 inches. As Gilbert's height is 5ft. 6in. it shows that he is over four inches above normal. This great length of arm naturally gives his ball greater impetus as the long bony arm is brought over the shoulder and catapults the ball on its way to the batsman. Gilbert's shoulder and arm are wonderfully supple, and they can be likened to the elastic in a catapult...

Gilbert is a married man, and during his stay in Brisbane nothing pleases him better than the receipt of his home correspondence. Mr. Allen concluded the interview by saying that Gilbert is a splendid behaved fellow. The spotlight can play on him, for he is indifferent to it.147

Although the portrayal in the press of Gilbert as being a 'special' sort of Aborigine was a way of creating an image it also resulted in the development of a myth about Gilbert. In focusing on aspects of his character and highlighting these the press was also able to conveniently gloss over the complexities of the Aboriginal question. By doing so it almost certainly denied Gilbert the opportunity to comment on the issue.

Just as there were to be misconceptions about Gilbert so too were there to be false and romantic depictions about life at Barambah. The outside view of the settlement contrasted dramatically with the perceptions of the inmates. Although the government never tried to hide the presence of the reserve, efforts were made to conceal much of what actually occurred. For the

---

146 ibid.
147 ibid.
Aboriginal inhabitants most aspects of life were rigidly controlled.

The presence of Gilbert in cricket served to counter, but perhaps only on an individual level, the usual stereotype of Aboriginal people as lazy, 'useless' primitives. If Gilbert had been paraded as an object of curiosity and an example of the level that the government had succeeded in civilising and training the 'blacks' then this would have achieved little more than to entrench existing prejudices. Fortunately this 'clever savage' depiction was not the one which pervaded press coverage.

For the inmates at Barambah the selection of Eddie Gilbert in the State team was the cause of great celebration and rejoicing. Eddie was reported by The Referee as being "extremely popular with his mates" in his cricket team and at Barambah.

Despite the good press he was receiving some people, such as 'Long-On' of The Brisbane Courier, now began to openly question his bowling style and suggest that he "delivers the ball with an arm and wrist action which is dangerously close to a throw." Some comment about his bowling action had been reported during the Colt's match but the debate had not continued in the papers until raised again by 'Long-On.' These and later accusations about his bowling action were to have a significant effect on his career. Most of initiators of these claims were at great pains to ensure that these comments did not appear to have a racial motive. However, these allegations were not well received by Superintendent Semple at Barambah, and the Head Teacher of the Settlement's Primary School, Mr. Robert Crawford. Throughout Gilbert's career both men proved to be "strong supporters of Eddie and were deeply distressed (and disbelieving) whenever he was accused of 'throwing' rather than 'bowling.'"
CHAPTER II
A FIRST-CLASS CAREER BEGINS

The opening Sheffield Shield match of the 1930-31 season and the first of Eddie Gilbert’s career at this level was against South Australia and commenced at the end of October. South Australia were weakened by the absence of their international players, Grimmett, Wall and Richardson. Queensland were expected to do well and, as it turned out, they ended up winning the match by 7 wickets, scoring 289 and 88 for 3 wickets. The South Australian team scored 72 and 304.

Queensland batted first and were greatly assisted by a splendid innings of 108 from Biggs and Thompson’s 78. It was a match which was to reveal the qualities of Biggs as a Sheffield Shield batsman. Gilbert was to prove to be a great ‘hit’ with the crowd when he made his batting appearance.

Gilbert, the aboriginal, was given an ovation when he walked out, and caused amusement when he stopped two bumping deliveries with his body. Both Carlton and Deverson tried to trap him by bowling outside the wicket, but he refused to be tempted, and was cheered when, by putting Deverson past point for two, he opened his account...

There was intense disappointment when Gilbert lost his wicket. He executed a beautiful carpet drive, which was stopped within a foot or so of the boundary. Two had been run, and the batsmen hesitated about a third. They stopped in the middle of the pitch, and then continued to run, but Gilbert was caught well out of the crease.

Gilbert made 6 before he was run out. Bowling for South Australia Lee secured 4 for 98, off 17.5 overs. Carlton claimed 4 for 67, off 26 overs, including 8 maidens.

When South Australia went in to bat Gilbert opened the bowling and Harris scored the first runs with "an uppish stroke over the heads of the slips" for 4. Gilbert bowled exceptionally well and was to give the batsmen an uncomfortable time, but, "contrary to his custom, he was

---

1 Sports Referee (Brisbane), 1 November 1930: 6.

2 ibid.
continually bowling outside the off stump, apparently for the field.\(^3\)

"An enormous crowd gathered at the oval drawn largely no doubt by curiosity as to how Gilbert would succeed in his first Sheffield Shield match."\(^4\) Throughout the afternoon it was apparent that everyone on the ground wished Gilbert well. They applauded every over that he bowled "and yelled with delight whenever he took a wicket."\(^5\) This was exemplified when he took the wicket of Walsh.

When with the second ball of his second over the abo. split the wickets of batsman Walsh, there was accorded him an ovation more brilliant than any which has been given a Queensland bowler for many a day. The crowd cheered; it was elated with the success that had come to the new bowling star.

**BLOOD TASTED**

Gilbert had tasted blood. He was eager to throw up the ball. A ball or so later a delivery of his flicked through and hit the legs of Lee, the new batsman.

"How's that?" shouted half a dozen fieldsmen with hands high in the air. "Not out" said the ump. It looked risky.

Gilbert was getting the ball to the bat of his vis-a-vis long before it was expected and was bowling worrysome.\(^6\)

Despite Gilbert's efforts the bowling honours were to belong to the other fast bowler for Queensland, Thurlow, who "forced the batsmen to play every ball, keeping his deliveries on the stumps, and making great pace off the pitch."\(^7\) On a wet pitch he finished with the outstanding figures of 5 wickets for 25, off 9 overs, of which 2 were maidens.

\(^3\) ibid.

\(^4\) The Telegraph (Brisbane), 3 November 1930: 11.

\(^5\) ibid.

\(^6\) Truth (Brisbane), 2 November 1930, 7.

\(^7\) ibid.
Eddie Gilbert was to take 2 wickets for 22, off 11 overs, with 4 maidens.

He clean bowled Walsh with a "trimmer" and his other victim, Tobin, played the ball on. He gets tremendous pace off the pitch in his first few balls of each starting session can be truly designated fast. The one that Harris put through the slips between Burns and Bensted in the aborigine's opening over was probably the fastest ball of the day. Harris said afterwards that it had all the elements of the best ball from any fast bowler.

The Referee commented on Gilbert's bowling:

Gilbert's pace off the pitch surprised the visitors, particularly in view of the shortness of his run. He stands only a few paces behind the umpire, but brings his arm down sharply at the moment of delivery, and the ball keeps low, besides making unusual pace off the pitch.

Gilbert loses his sting after three or four overs. It came as no surprise to see the Queensland skipper keeping him on for longer spells. He should be bowled for short stretches, and brought back for an over against new batsmen if the best is to be made of his bowling.

The Daily Mail (Brisbane) was a little more critical of his effort when it said:

The trouble with Gilbert is that he cannot maintain his pace for any great length of time, and there were periods later in the day when he was no faster than Bensted.

His shock ball at the start of the innings will get him plenty of wickets against slow, firm-footed batsmen, but it is doubtful if he will disturb men of the better Sheffield Shield school.

In a comment about Gilbert's fielding the Sunday Pictorial (Sydney) reported: "He is clean, without being clever, about the slips, but there is nothing slouchy in anything he does."

Carlton, with 17, not out, was top-score in the South Australian total of 72.

Queensland's bowling effort had been magnificent and was one of the greatest bowling achievements for many years. The Queensland captain, Frank Gough, chose to ask his opponents

---

8 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 3 November 1930: 7.

9 The Referee, 5 November 1930: 18-19. "An abnormal length of arm seems to offer the explanation [for Gilbert's bowling action]."

10 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 3 November 1930: 7. It was considered that he gets a little tired after about three 8 ball overs.

11 Sunday Pictorial (Sydney), 2 November 1930: 6.
to 'follow on.' In the second innings the South Australians showed much better batting form in making a total of 304. Lee scored 57, not out, while Nitschke gave a great display in scoring 54. Neither Thurlow or Gilbert proved to be as fast as they were in the first innings, "and did not preserve such a good length." Oxenham took 3 for 60, while Gilbert was next best with 2 for 76.

In scoring the required runs in the second innings, Queensland lost 3 wickets for 88. Biggs completed a fine match with 47 runs to his credit in this innings. The performances of Biggs in batting and Thurlow and Gilbert in the bowling department had led to a highly 'pleasing' result for the home state.

Eddie Gilbert was believed to have proved his worth in the game and, as outlined, had proved to be a very popular figure with the crowds. South Australian batsman Tobin made the comment that "Gilbert was a very fine bowler" and he "nips up quickly and his arm action is very deceiving at first."

The Referee thought that, although he took four wickets, he was entitled to at least two more. "He is an unorthodox fast bowler, and because of that is an asset. His short run deceives batsmen and his great pace off the wicket makes him an ideal shock bowler." The Bulletin was to suggest: "The State is building a lot on his success, but is likely to be disappointed unless the side improves in its slip-fielding, which has been consistently villainous for some years."

---

12 The Brisbane Courier, 12 November 1930: 8.
14 Truth (Brisbane), 2 November 1930: 7.
15 ibid.
16 The Referee, 12 November 1930: 8.
Figure 2.1. Queensland versus South Australia - Parry caught off Gilbert.

Figure 2.2. Queensland cricket team 1930-31 season.
‘Cover Point,’ of the Sports Referee (Brisbane), was to mention doubts concerning the bowling action of Gilbert:

The great pace gathered by the Barambah bowler, after so short a run, aroused a great amount of discussion. And, as usual, in such cases, there was some questioning of his delivery. There were, however, many experienced players and umpires taking particular note of Gilbert’s action, and I believe that the general opinion favoured the correctness of his delivery. After watching his action repeatedly in the matches, and at the nets I have yet to discover anything in his action which would justify the judgement that he throws the ball.  

During the match Eddie Gilbert was to conduct a display of his own which was reported by the Truth (Brisbane) newspaper:  

A unique boomerang throwing display took place on the Exhibition Oval yesterday after the thousands who came to watch the day’s cricket had departed. The star actor was Eddie Gilbert, the aboriginal bowling express from Barambah, who showed that he could use his native weapon, too.  

His audience was the South Australian cricket team, and the players gathered around him while he flung his boomerang high into the air, making it land with accuracy at his feet. First he cast it in a complete circle, then a spiral dive.  

"It’s the wind that makes the double circle," he explained in his wistful manner to a South Australian.  

"The wind didn’t make the mark you put on my leg with a ball this afternoon," laughed another player. Eddie laughed, too, as he threw his boomerang in the air for the last time.  

After the South Australian match was completed the Queensland captain, Frank Gough, presented Gilbert with the ball used in South Australia’s first innings in recognition of his effort as ‘bowler of the match.’ "He passed the keepsake on to his club at Barambah, and they are having it mounted and inscribed." This cost (£2/15/0) was later paid out of Gilbert’s bank account.  

Gilbert quickly became the most ‘discussed’ player in Queensland cricket. The relative novelty of Gilbert created interest, and although it could easily have been the source of vilification

---

18 Sports Referee (Brisbane), 8 November 1930: 12.
19 Truth (Brisbane), 2 November 1930: 7.
20 The Referee, 10 December 1930: 19.
this was generally not the case. A great many people, often after reading about him in the newspapers, went to see him play and usually came away with an appreciation of his abilities. Right from the beginning of his first-class career Gilbert was to be a popular and ‘colourful’ figure with the cricket crowds.

This popularity was at variance with the generally accepted racial views of the population. The question of race was to be a significant factor that determined the course of the career of Eddie Gilbert but it was not the only issue. In Gilbert’s case racial prejudice was tempered somewhat (but was still evident) and he was to enjoy a surprising level of public acceptance which occasionally bordered on adulation. The acceptance and admiration that Gilbert received tends to show that when there is a demand for sport the particulars about an individual may lose their significance, especially if achievement and entertainment are seen as important.\(^1\) However, the ‘neutral’ or ‘favourable’ racial attitude that many had towards Gilbert did nothing to change thinking towards Aborigines generally.

A settlement inmate, Vince Bunda, was to state:

There was no incentive given to any people to want to represent...How many newspapers came onto the mission. The Superintendent would get one...about 8 papers. Never would get to read the papers. You were more or less isolated from the outside world. It didn’t bother us and we didn’t bother it. You went to town you were treated like you were a scum. This was in Murgon. If you looked at a white girl you got your arse kicked by somebody. Gilbert did not suffer the same way. Gilbert was a man unto himself. Whatever everybody done it didn’t worry him.\(^2\)

\(^1\) E.M. Swift. ‘Reach Out And Touch Someone.’ *Sports Illustrated.* 5 August 1991: 54-59. This article discusses various relevant aspects.

Despite the many accolades that were directed towards Gilbert at least one paper, The Alert (Maryborough), carried an article which was a sobering reminder of his 'station' in life and a sharp contrast to the State cricketer in his Queensland maroon blazer and cap:

Gilbert, the aboriginal express from Barambah, who performed well for Queensland in the inter-State match against South Australia, is a married man, and after he had finished hurling the sphere at the Crow eaters he began to get lonely and started to sing "Show Me the Way to Go Home." And no wonder the spade was lonely! He hadn't for a whole fortnight kicked a heap of cow manure, or heard a curlew wail, or the cawing of a crow, or the laughter of a kookaburra, or the jabbering of a jabberwock, which is all sweet music to the ears of the aboriginal, and he yearns for it just as the cow-cockey does for the tinkle of Strawberry's bell. If he goes south with the Qld. team—and on form he should be next to a certainty—Eddie might fret himself to a shadow, and the Q.C.A. will have to see that he is not allowed to drift into the doldrums.23

When Gilbert returned to Barambah after the Shield match it was to yet another enthusiastic welcome. He was reported as not being "in the slightest affected by hero-worship."24

However, his life would never be the same again, nor for that matter would life be the same for inmates at Barambah.

Eddie Gilbert returned to play for his settlement team in the local competition and the Maryborough Chronicle suggested that, "he proved that the recent first grade play had decidedly improved his playing."25 More correctly, though, was the fact that he continued to display the exceptional form that was to characterise his achievements at this level of cricket. Reports of his outstanding performances for Barambah were to be of interest not only to the Queensland papers but to papers such as the Sydney Morning Herald.

23 The Alert (Maryborough), 14 November 1930.

24 The Referee, 10 December 1930: 19.

WITH BAT AND BALL.
EDDIE GILBERT'S PERFORMANCE
WONDAI, November 17.

Playing for the Barambah Aboriginal Settlement against Wondai in the Kilkivan Cricket Association fixtures, Eddie Gilbert, the inter-State player, gave a brilliant display yesterday. Barambah batted first, compiling 281 for six wickets (declared). Of this total Gilbert made 120, retired. Wondai could put on only 116 against the bowling of the Queensland representative, who secured five for 25. Barambah secured a win on the first innings.26

During November 1930, Barambah played against Kilkivan. Kilkivan made 82 in the first innings and Gilbert took 6 wickets for 15 runs, off 5 overs. Batting at number three for Barambah he was out l.b.w. for no score. Kilkivan compiled 172 in their second innings with Gilbert taking 1 wicket at a cost of 17 runs.27

Towards the end of the month he was back in Brisbane preparing for the Shield match against New South Wales. The contest commenced on the 28th November 1930, and was to prove to be a match that would be long remembered.

Jackson and Wendell Bill opened the innings for New South Wales and "batted stylishly, but took few risks."28 Gilbert gave the batsmen some worry early on but did not make an early breakthrough. Except for the first couple of overs the Queensland bowlers were severely punished. Bill scored 153 runs and during one of Gilbert's bowling spells "he hit the fast bowler to the boundary on four occasions, the over costing 16 runs."29 Kippax made 158 and batted with "that elegance and faultless timing which has made him so popular with Australian crowds."30 Both these efforts were surpassed as Queensland cricket enthusiasts witnessed the 'champagne of cricket,' when S. McCabe, in one of his most aggressive moods, "gave as fine a

26 Sydney Morning Herald, 18 November 1930: 13.
27 The Gympie Times, 29 November 1930: 2.
28 The Brisbane Courier, 29 November 1930: 5.
29 ibid.
30 ibid.
display of square cutting and straight driving as has been seen on the Exhibition Grounds during recent years."

McCabe was cheered by the crowd when he became the top-scorer with a brilliant 161, by hitting Gilbert to the leg boundary. Two balls later he was beaten by a beautiful length ball from Gilbert, and was clean-bowled. At the end of the same over Gilbert delighted the crowd when he bowled Hunt. Later, when the score was 9 down for 558, some amusement was provided "while Stewart precariously played Gilbert, the aboriginal badly beating him and hitting him on the pads on three occasions." A story that was often told in later years and one which highlights an issue that was to emerge in the game concerned the dismissal of Hunt by Gilbert. Some of the versions have been pieced together.

Bill Hunt had just taken guard when the ball arrived from Gilbert, skittling him.
Hunt protested to the umpire:
'Hey I've just taken block.'
Umpire: 'You're just out.'
Hunt: 'If that's the way it is, I'll chuck him out.'

Hunt believed he had been deliberately thrown out by Eddie Gilbert. Hunt was a fairly belligerent character and when he returned to the dressing-room he told his team-mates, "Just watch me boys. You saw what that b____ did to me. Watch what I do to him." As 'luck' would have it, Hunt was bowling when Gilbert came in to bat at number ten for Queensland. After a couple of normal deliveries Hunt, a left-hander, deliberately foot-faulted, to

---

31 ibid.
focus umpire Orr's attention on his boots. As he prepared to bowl his fifth ball he gave "a big wink to Hal Hooker at mid-off." He ran in, stopped, drew back his arm "and let fly from about 23 yards [21 metres]," and "in full view of the two umpires, the Queensland officials in the pavilion and everybody else threw down the stumps." "Eddie was standing, bat in the air, when the throw broke the wicket. One umpire was looking at the ground and the square-leg man was completely taken by surprise." "All right, Eddie?" he called after the departing batsman. "Orright, Bill," the Aboriginal grinned back. There were no official repercussions.

Another version of the story suggests:

"Eddie threw me out! By cripes, yeah! And later on I deliberately did the same to him. And d'you know what he said?...I'll tell you. He put his arm around my shoulder and said "Well bowled, Bill. That was a beauty!" 'So you see, the little fellah couldn't tell a bowl from a chuck anyway! Nice chap, but."

The illegal delivery "escaped the notice of the umpires and Gilbert walked away with a broad smile on his face." The umpires either did not notice the throw (if indeed it occurred) or chose to take no action. Newspaper match reports at the time make no mention of the event. Although Gilbert had not had an adequate chance to study the 'finer' points of cricket it is hard to imagine that he would seek to attack the batsman by deliberately throwing the ball.

35 ibid., 69.

36 Robinson, op.cit., 205.

37 ibid.

38 ibid., 205.

39 Docker, op.cit., 69.

40 From newspaper clipping of The Sporting Globe (undated). Various articles have reported the story, for example, Sunday Sun (Brisbane), 8 August, 1982 and The Herald (Melbourne) 13 December 1984: 23.

41 The Sporting Globe, ibid., 1935. Photocopy article.
Figure 2.3. 'Under a Cloud' - some doubts expressed.

Figure 2.4. Aborigines in cricket - a cartoon view.

"How'd y' like the googly bowler, Jacky?"
"No good! Seven times I hit nothings, and then he hit stumps."
As New South Wales amassed their total of 566 on the Saturday it was in front of a crowd estimated at 8,000. One of the disappointing features of the match was to be "the uniformly poor fielding of the home team" and "at least half a dozen chances were declined, and too many erratic returns were made from the outfield." Eddie Gilbert proved to be Queensland's best bowler with 4 for 118, a 'distinctly good performance' in the circumstances. The Sun (Sydney) cricket writer was to suggest:

Gilbert had upset preconceived notions of his capabilities against first class batsmen. Earlier in the innings when he had taken none for 88, there was talk of his being passed out. But his figures at the end of the innings have left the public optimistic for his future.

Hurwood's 3 wickets cost 108 runs and Oxenham conceded 109 runs in gaining his 2 wickets. The dismissal of Bill by Gilbert was to cause a minor 'sensation.'

He swung wildly to a bouncing ball from Gilbert, mis-hit it, and hit it over the head of Gilbert. The crowd gasped while both the bowler and Biggs dashed for the catch. Simultaneously with being bumped hard by Biggs, the aboriginal held grimly to the ball, although a second or two afterwards he collapsed. His feat was wildly cheered.

Eddie Gilbert had winded himself but recovered in a couple of minutes. He refused a glass of water that was brought out to him.

Queenslanders had generally believed that they had the strongest bowling attack of all in the Sheffield Shield. However, with the exception of Gilbert, the failure of the 'cream' of Queensland's attack was to prove to be a worry to supporters of Queensland cricket.

Gough and Mossop opened for Queensland and began what was to be arguably the hardest battle by Queensland batsmen in history. Faced with a huge total Queensland 'dug in' on

---

42 The Brisbane Courier, 29 November 1930: 5.

43 ibid.

44 The Sun (Sydney), 29 November 1930: 4.

45 The Brisbane Courier, 29 November 1930: 5.
a perfect wicket. They started batting on Saturday and continued on Monday, batting all day for
the loss of two wickets to end the day 76 runs short of the New South Wales total. Gough scored
his first Shield century after being dropped when he was 21. He went on to make 137 before
being out lbw. Thompson played a splendid innings and "none of the bowlers looked like
breaking through his defence." At one stage Kippax, the New South Wales captain, personally
resorted to leg theory to keep the runs down. When the record Queensland innings ended at 687,
Thompson had made 275, Oxenham 67, Bensted 52 and Hurwood 47.

Thompson had been one of the mainstays of Queensland batting for many years. With
regard to his innings The Referee reported that it was "not only the biggest ever played for the
State by anyone, but the finest." The Telegraph (Brisbane) was to describe the batting display of Gilbert:

The appearance of Gilbert was the signal for more bursts of applause. Before he
had scored he was nearly run out. He drove a ball hard to mid-on and without
waiting for Thompson set sail for the other end. He was half-way down the pitch
before he realised that Thompson had not moved and his frantic scramble home
caused as much amusement amongst spectators as concern. Eventually he opened
his account with a single from a neat turn to leg off Hooker.

Gilbert was bowled by Hunt for 4 runs.

The New South Wales bowlers had a difficult time on a pitch that was 'lifeless' and all in
favour of the batsmen. Hunt, who had shown promise in the Colt's match earlier in the month,
was the best of the bowlers with 4 wickets for 128, from 33.3 overs. Stewart took 2 for 72 and
Chilvers had 2 for 219.

The New South Welshmen lost 5 wickets for 159 in the second innings, in which Ron
Oxenham bowled splendidly. Oxenham was to take 4 wickets for only 19 runs, and Thurlow,

46 Truth (Brisbane), 30 November 1930: 7.

47 The Referee, 3 December 1930: 19.

48 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 3 December 1930: 5.
with 1 for 30, took the other wicket to fall. New South Wales batsmen Jackson and McCabe both scored 53 runs.

Queensland were to score a unique victory on the first innings. In commenting on the performance of Gilbert, the Truth (Brisbane) believed that Gilbert had earned his place in the touring Queensland team, "and his quaint delivery and his fiery bowling will be watched by thousands of Southern enthusiasts, who see in him a probable test match bowler of the very near future."49

The Referee focussed, in part, on one event:

He has learnt quite a lot from his Brisbane matches, and was very grateful for the sporting kindness shown by N.S.W. bowler Hooker, who gave him quite a number of hints on how to hold the ball, and get the best out of his deliveries. Considering Hooker was in the opposing team, and is a resident of a different State, it was splendid sportsmanship for him to take an interest in a very shy abo. lad.50

Another article in the same paper discussed his run-up:

This young aboriginal from Barambah Settlement has demonstrated to 'white' bowlers that a long run to the wicket is a waste of valuable time and energy. Gilbert's approach is four or five steps. His fast pace comes from wrist action and terrific swing over. On several occasions Eddie had to wait for the batsman. The reverse occurred with the 'white' fast bowler. The batsman rested on his bat till the bowler finished his long walk back in the field. He then had ample time to prepare for the attack during the bowler's spectacular run to deliver the ball...

Spectators expressed their appreciation of his style of fast bowling by according Eddie Gilbert a well-deserved ovation.51

When interviewed after the match about his bowling Gilbert said that "he preferred the straight ball with all the pace he could put into it."52

49 Truth (Brisbane), 30 November 1930: 7.
50 The Referee, 10 December 1930: 19.
51 ibid.
52 The Sporting Globe, 10 December 1930: 9.
Although his selection for the Southern tour seemed to be a formality, if form were to be the basis, the allegations which were made during the match regarding Gilbert's bowling needed to be resolved. The doubts about the fairness of Gilbert's deliveries were based on his "wrist action, and the tremendous amount of pace which he develops off the pitch."53

The concerns about Eddie Gilbert's bowling are reported to have begun when:

One of the New South Wales players, who toured overseas with the Australian team, is reported to have said during the recent match in Brisbane that the aboriginal bowler threw five of his eight deliveries...54

These comments were added to by a former Queensland inter-State player, who argued that no man of Gilbert's physique could develop the pace that the Aborigine did with such a short run to the wicket without throwing.55 The New South Wales manager stated that he thought the action was doubtful, "and would be questioned by the umpires in the south."56

---

**Figures:**

Figure 2.5. 'Does He Bowl or Throw?' - newspaper headline.

---

53 The Brisbane Courier, 10 December 1930: 7.
54 ibid.
55 ibid.
56 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 3 December 1930: 16.
The Sporting Globe believed: "Holding the ball as he does might create the impression that he throws." It further reported:

Before completing the team, the selectors were faced with a difficulty concerning Eddie Gilbert, the aboriginal bowler. Members of the South Australia and New South Wales teams had expressed definite opinions, privately of course, that he threw the ball. Prominent New South Wales players said that he would surely be no-balled in Sydney. That would make him an almost ineffective member of the side, a risk that would be too great to take.

During the New South Wales - Queensland match, slow motion pictures were taken of his bowling. The screening of these proved to the selectors and other Q.C.A. officials that Gilbert bowled only a rare ball to which exception could be taken.

He was therefore selected and his appearance with the team should be an attraction that will increase gate receipts.

The article outlined the view that the film of Gilbert’s bowling was not entirely satisfactory. State selector, Mr. E. Hutcheon, declared that there was no indication of a throw. "I never have thought he threw...and I have watched him as closely as anyone, and from every possible angle." The Referee reported that:

There might be an odd delivery that could be termed doubtful, but it is a very odd one where there was a suspicion that the elbow was bent in the final part of the bowling action. One particular feature that is evidence in Gilbert’s favor, is that at the middle of his action his arm is dead straight.

The Daily Mail (Brisbane) said:

In the majority of instances the film disclosed that Gilbert’s delivery was absolutely fair. In these pictures his arm delivery showed that from the moment he started his upward swing from below the hip, the elbow showed a straight line with the forearm and upper arm, and the action came over with a perfect full-arm swing.

---

57 The Sporting Globe, 17 December 1930: 1.
58 ibid., 10 December 1930: 8.
59 The Referee, 10 December 1930: 19.
60 ibid.
61 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 3 December 1930: 16.
In addition to the motion pictures already available, it was arranged by the Q.C.A. to have Gilbert filmed at a special session. After viewing the films the majority of the executive of the Q.C.A., and the selection committee, decided that there was nothing irregular in Gilbert's bowling. Mr. Len Allen believed Eddie Gilbert's delivery was perfectly fair when he said: "We have several very competent umpires in Brisbane, and if they say Gilbert's delivery is clean, that should suffice."\(^{62}\)

One of the match umpires, Mr. Orr, who had a long experience in inter-State and international cricket, stated that "there could be no possible doubt about the fairness of Gilbert's deliveries."\(^{63}\) He also indicated that there was not the slightest sign of any bending of the elbow, which constitutes a throw.

Despite the efforts that the Queensland selectors went to in satisfying themselves that Gilbert was a fair bowler, the cricket-writer for *The Referee* remained unimpressed:

> Without questioning his methods - we have never seen him Sydney - it is hard to see what good is done by tests of this nature. It is for the umpires to determine - either umpire, as a matter of fact. They will need nothing but their eyes and the spirit of the law to guide them. Umpires in different states take different views on these matters.\(^{64}\)

Just about the last words on the bowling issue were left with Gilbert himself:

> He just laughs when his name is mentioned in praise or criticism. The lad’s outlook on criticism was shown when the suggestion was made to take a slow-motion picture of his action to settle the "throwing" question. "That would be a good way to find out," was his only comment.\(^{65}\)

In another article in the paper it mentioned the plight of Aborigines such as Jack Marsh, of New South Wales, who many years previously "bowled in splints to demonstrate that he did not bend

---

\(^{62}\) *The Referee*, 10 December 1930: 19.

\(^{63}\) *The Daily Mail* (Brisbane), 3 December 1930: 16.

\(^{64}\) *The Referee*, 10 December 1930: 18.

\(^{65}\) ibid.
his arm after the fairness of his delivery had been challenged." The selectors had considered that his action was fair "but Crockett, one of the ablest Umpires in Australia has ever [ever] had, did not think so."^57

It was inevitable that Eddie Gilbert would frequently be compared to the only other Aborigine to play cricket for Queensland, Albert Henry. The Referee wrote:

A. Henry, the very tall and thin fast bowler, who played for Queensland over twenty years ago, was faster than Gilbert. He was, for a few overs, about the fastest bowler Australia has ever seen. But Henry was not to be compared with Gilbert as a cricketer. The latter bats left-hand and is by no means a duffer with the willow...^68

Mr. Len Allen was appointed manager of the Queensland team for the Southern tour in a move that was clearly seen as ensuring that Eddie would be 'looked after.' This was not without reason. The Sporting Globe, under the heading of, 'COLOR LINE? - A Cricket Problem' said:

Now Gilbert has been chosen for the southern tour of the Queensland Shield team and it is said that some of the players are perturbed about it. Some Q.C.A. officials are also agreed that his presence with the team may create situations that will need tactful handling by the manager.

According to our Brisbane correspondent there should be no justification for any objection to Gilbert. He is a quiet, well behaved man, and well qualified in every way to be a member of any side.^69

Around the same time The Referee published a cartoon titled, ‘This Gilbert Business,’ in which certain connections were made between his bowling and his ‘boomerang throwing ancestors.’^70

It was to be clear reminder that he was a black ‘boy’ playing a white man’s game. A short description of his bowling action reinforced the difference.

---

^66 ibid.

^67 ibid.

^68 ibid.

^69 The Sporting Globe, 10 December 1930: 1.

^70 The Referee, 10 December 1930: 12.
His spare physical proportions and his short run of six yards are puzzling to those who have seen him bowl. He kind of curls himself up when delivering the ball, which flies with a low trajectory; mostly straight at the stumps.  

Back at Barambah Gilbert played in the Kilkivan-Wondai District representative team against Gympie. After his recent State appearance his participation in this match created a great deal of interest. He finished with 10 wickets for 93. Gympie made 182 after losing the toss and being sent in to bat. Top-scorer was Cheales, who made 73, not out. Gilbert bowled a splendid length and was very fast. He clean-bowled 7 opponents for 53 after he had 3 for 10 at one stage. In one dismissal he bowled Montgomery with an exceptionally good delivery, the ball just flicking off the bails. Kilkivan-Wondai made 205, with Lane contributing 119 and Gilbert, batting at number five, making 44 before O'Neill bowled him. In their second innings Gympie made 211. O'Donnell compiled 56. Gilbert again had the best figures of the bowlers with 3 for 40. Kilkivan-Wondai made 157 in the second innings. Baster was 36, not out, while Gilbert scored 9. Rogers had the match-winning bowling figures of 5 for 57 as Gympie ended up defeating Kilkivan-Wondai by 31 runs in a well-fought match.  

On the settlement, and away from cricket, Gilbert's high profile was beginning to have an effect on his personal relationships. There is some suggestion that, despite his reported shyness and modesty, Eddie's good looks and great popularity, particularly with the ladies on the settlement, was beginning to cause problems with his wife 'Edie.' Eddie revelled in the interest and attention of the ladies and 'Edie,' quite rightly, was annoyed about this. Apparently 'Edie' became "a very jealous person and broke a watch and other gifts he had been given."  

Vince Bunda, an inmate, remembered 'Edie' a little differently.

71 The Sporting Globe, 10 December 1930: 9.
72 The Gympie Times, 9 December 1930: 7.
73 Rita Huggins, personal interview, April 1988.
I used to go to his place a lot. His place was on the road towards the sporting field ground. He lived on the left hand side of the road ... where the school is now. I used to often go and chop wood for his wife. She was a very nice lady.  

Mrs. Semple, wife of Superintendent Semple, was thought of as 'a lovely lady' and she gave a helping hand to Eddie by giving him lessons in table manners. Normally inmates were not allowed into the homes of the white settlement officials unless they were working there, but Gilbert was seen as a special case. Betty MacKenzie (Semple), recalled:

> When Eddie was chosen to represent the State, my mother, realising he would be staying at hotels in the South, made sure he would be at ease when confronted with the array of cutlery comprising dinner table settings. He came to our house and my mother saw to it that he was well schooled in such matters as how to distinguish fish knives and forks from those used for meat, etc., and the use of finger bowls, serviettes and other such niceties [sic]. According to the Queensland team manager, Eddie’s table manners were impeccable.

Ezra ('Boxer') Wyeth was to remember a story related to him about Gilbert's first trip south:

> At the first stop lunch was served in the station cafeteria. The players made their quick way inside and sat down. Arms reached out and in a moment all the fruit was gone. Eddie missed out. Later came another stop at dinner time. There was the hurried entry into the station and the players sat down. The first hand to reach the fruit was Eddie’s.

The first match of the Southern tour was against New South Wales, who were without six Australian players, while Queensland were without Hornibrook and Hurwood. There was considerable interest in Gilbert based on the recent controversy concerning the fairness of his deliveries and it was obvious that Gilbert would be closely watched. The game opened on a beautiful day and with a top-class wicket. Before the start of the match the Queensland players had a meeting and the Queensland team which took the field against New South Wales was not

---

74 Vince Bunda, personal interview, _op.cit._

75 Rita Huggins, personal interview, _op.cit._


77 Ezra ('Boxer') Wyeth, personal correspondence, March 1992. Wyeth did not play for Queensland until a few years later.
the team officially chosen by the Queensland selectors. This was to be the first inkling of a series of events which would unfold later on the tour.

Batting first, the Queensland batsmen "collapsed, partially recovered, and again tumbled over like nine-pins, making only 166 in favourable conditions." Goodwin scored 62 and Oxenham contributed 53 to the total after Queensland had been 5 wickets down for 38 at lunch. For New South Wales, Hunt, with 5 for 37, off 20 overs, took the bowling honours with a 'steady' length. Hooker took 2 wickets for 31 while Stewart ended up with 1 wicket for 25. The New South Wales bowling attack was aggressive and was supported by some good fielding.

Bill and Fingleton opened gingerly for New South Wales against the fast bowling attack of 'shock' bowler Gilbert and his partner Thurlow. Fingleton went on to top-score with 56 as New South Wales toppled, to be all out for 143. Gilbert was unquestioned about his bowling and was the 'pick' of the bowlers. According to The Brisbane Courier, "he bowled nothing loose, was dead on the sticks and in this showing is a perfectly fair bowler." His "short run, long-wristed, snappy delivery proved most effective" and his final bowling figures were 4 for 44, off 14.6 overs, while Oxenham took 2 for 21, off 13 overs, which included 5 maidens. The first wicket Eddie Gilbert took was that of Cummins, who was "caught in the slips, a grand diving effort by Thurlow." Next man in was Hooker, and he was beaten with pace on the first ball that he faced and was bowled middle stump. The crowd cheered the effort of Gilbert who was on a hat-trick but next man, Allsopp, prevented this from occurring. A later dismissal was effected when Campbell "turned sideways, facing short leg to play a defensive stroke to Gilbert.

---

78 The Brisbane Courier, 12 December 1930: 5.
79 ibid.
80 Sydney Morning Herald, 13 December 1930: 16.
81 ibid.
and his off stump was rattled."\textsuperscript{82}

After an unimpressive start to the second innings Queensland made a total of 369. Binstead played very well to score 92 and was unlucky to miss out on scoring a century. He was "sound as a bell, very straight in his defence, and clean on the off side."\textsuperscript{83} Goodwin plodded along to make another good score of 64, Oxenham batted brightly for 32, and Thompson made 37. Eddie Gilbert, rather unorthodox with his left-handed batting, proved to be popular with the Sydney crowd, and scored a valuable 24 runs when occupying the batting crease.

The Daily Mail (Brisbane) was to point out:

Few players have received a more flattering reception on emerging to bat on the Cricket Ground for the first time before a large crowd than that accorded the dark-skinned Australian, Gilbert, as he strolled in to-day. The cheering broke out afresh as he took block to Hooker. But there was a perfect crescendo of applause when he took advice from the Hill to "Hit him over the plurry fence Jacky," and swept a skyer [sic] from Chivers to the leg boundary.

Gilbert continued to give an attractive display, and had the crowd in high glee when, with Thurlow, he treated them to a breezy 10 minutes. Hooker had him in two minds whether to attack or defend often, but when he showed aggression Gilbert played some good shots, and proved that he might be placed a bit higher in the batting order with advantage. His mastery of Chivers was a revelation, and it was with utmost confidence that he played the googly expert.

Gilbert's aggressive tactics probably caused the ball to become unstitched, and Lowe consulted the umpires, and the game was held up while another ball was obtained. Gilbert signalised [sic] the change with a beautiful leg-sweep off Chivers, which got to the fence.\textsuperscript{84}

Gilbert was batting well, and with a great shot hit Hunt to the leg boundary. He was nearly stumped, but the next ball he swung to the leg fence to the great delight of the crowd. Hunt clean-bowled him when he attempted a sweep shot to leg. Gilbert had made the most of "some

\textsuperscript{82} ibid.

\textsuperscript{83} The Referee, 17 December 1930: 12.

\textsuperscript{84} The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 18 December 1930: 8.
easy stuff tossed up unwisely by Chilvers, and later Hunt, and played a number of forceful and well-placed shots. The last-wicket stand between Gilbert and Thurlow added 31 runs before Gilbert was out. The Queensland innings had lasted 333 minutes. The best bowler for New South Wales was the spinner, Hooker, who showed great ability and ended up with 4 for 63. Hunt collected 2 wickets for 51 and Stewart had the figures of 2 for 57.

**Figure 2.6. 'This Gilbert Business' - a racist view.**

85 The Referee, 17 December 1930: 12.
Arthur Mailey, in an article for The Daily Mail (Brisbane), wrote of Gilbert’s return to the pavilion at the end of his innings:

"Good old Eddie. "Well batted, Eddie, "You’ll have to go in first next innings, Eddie."

These congratulations greeted Eddie Gilbert, the Queensland aborigine, and express bowler of the State’s cricket team, when he returned to the dressing rooms after having hit up a brilliant 24 runs.

His team mates patted him on the back and kept up a running fire of congratulations, but Eddie did not turn a hair. His face was glistening with perspiration. He knew they would be pleased up at the mission.

"I think they," he said, "they would be more pleased up there if I got 50 runs than if I took 50 wickets."

Gilbert is a quiet and unassuming fellow, well-mannered, and courteous—too well-mannered and courteous in fact.

"What do you think of the barrackers?" I asked him.
"Oh, they’re good."
Do they worry you?"
"Me? Oh, no, they’re fine."86

New South Wales faced a total of 392 runs as they started the second innings, and at the close had made 212 for one wicket, so the position of the game had swung around to their favour.

In a fine performance against very steady bowling and zealous fielding, the batsmen gave nothing away. The defence was nevertheless badly overdone after the 4 o’clock interval. The chance was made for batsmen to attack bowling which had tired a trifle.87

Even after making allowance for the total set for New South Wales, the ‘sombre’ performance that they were to put up could hardly have been justified. Bill batted for 242 minutes for 93, not out, in an innings that seemed ‘barren’ of shots. The crowd jeered and whistled the painfully slow display. Early in the innings Bill (21) was dropped by Thurlow at first slip when he stopped the ball, but it jumped out of his hands and he failed to grasp it at a second attempt. At 68 he

86 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 18 December 1930: 8.

87 The Referee, 17 December 1930: 12.
was dropped after a juggling attempt by Leeson off the bowling of Gilbert. In the total of 212 for 1 wicket, Fingleton made 71 while Love was 32, not out. Thompson was the only wicket-taker for Queensland with 1 for 45, while Gilbert had 0 for 51 but should have taken a wicket or two with any luck. The Queensland fielding was of a high standard, with Amos brilliant, while Gilbert earned constant applause for his good work on the ground and 'snappy' throwing.

The effort of the New South Welshmen in the second innings was described as "dour and determined, but utterly lacking in imagination and punch." After continuous rain on the final day (Monday) the captains decided to abandon the match at 3 p.m. While the rain came down on the last day Gilbert was part of the 'fun' of a mock trial held in one of the rooms along with players from both teams and others. Gilbert "was charged with signing autographs and found guilty." Queensland won the match by 23 runs on the first innings when it looked as if the New South Welshmen should have won.

According to The Daily Mail (Brisbane), in a cartoon comment entitled, 'Under a Cloud,' the bowling of Gilbert and the rain were the factors and issues of the last day of the game. In another article it said, in part:

Very few of the thousands who have seen Eddie Gilbert, the aborigine from Barambah settlement, bowl at the Exhibition ground during the last two months have entertained any doubt of the fairness of his delivery—nor of its fastness.

Well, Gilbert has been in the south, and not once has his delivery been questioned. Arthur Mailey, the former international cricketer, sums up the aborigine's bowling as well as anyone when he stated that there was nothing in Gilbert's delivery to suggest that he threw the ball. "When Gilbert commences the circular motion with his arm," he says, "his arm is bent at the elbow, but it straightens before the ball is delivered."

---

90 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 16 December 1930: 15.
In reviewing the match under the headings, ‘Same Old Story’ - ‘Opportunities Missed-Catches Dropped,’ the *Sports Referee* (Brisbane) was to be fulsome in its praise of Eddie Gilbert.

The catching of the Queensland team on tour has often been far from what it should have been, and we have lost many a match through bad fielding. Gilbert was the chief sufferer among the bowlers last Saturday. Sydney critics said that the Barambah player and Oxenham were the most dangerous of our attack that day. In view of this praise for Gilbert, his bowling success of the first innings and his good batting, those persons who were advocating that he should not be sent on the Southern tour are now endeavouring to find some excuse for their error of judgement.

Sydney took Eddie Gilbert to its heart. The hillites [sic] were with him as a man. His colour mattered nothing to them, except to add to their interest in him. And that is as it should be. The Barambah fast bowler earned his place in the Queensland touring eleven, and it would have been injustice to him not to have sent him with the eleven. A more modest, unassuming, likeable fellow never came out of the Barambah or any other native settlement. I hope that his successes on tour will continue. If they do, the eyes of the Australian selectors will be upon him.91

Gilbert was asked about Sydney:

Everything is good in Sydney, according to Eddie. The cigars are good. He has not seen the surf beaches yet, but he is going motoring to-day and expects that the beaches will be good also.

Eddie Gilbert has other hobbies besides cricket. He is an expert boomerang thrower, plays the euphonium for the mission band, is an excellent swimmer, and tennis player, and is quite good with the boxing gloves.92

Undoubtedly city dwellers were less familiar with Aborigines than people in the ‘bush.’ In Sydney an incident occurred which indicated just how far removed Aborigines were from the sight, and perhaps thoughts, of the general public of this city. Eddie had ordered soup at the hotel the team was staying at and when serving him the waitress politely inquired: “Do all the little Indians have soup?”93

91 *Sports Referee* (Brisbane), 20 December 1930: 12.

92 *The Daily Mail* (Brisbane), 18 December 1930: 10.

After the match *The Sydney Mail* printed a fine article about Gilbert.

The Queensland attack proved itself very strong and varied, with Eddie Gilbert, the aboriginal bowler, as the most interesting personality. His methods and efficiency would be rather difficult to appreciate without actually seeing him in action. Very slim and slight in build, not over jockey weight, he looks a mere wisp of a boy amongst his big Queensland comrades. He differs very greatly, for example, from Jack Marsh in build, activity, and athleticism. His step lacks the spring and elasticity so characteristic of the movements of Marsh. His walk to the wickets, for instance, is very slow and even apologetic, suggestive of his retiring disposition. He moves about the field from place to place slowly and quietly, but springs into action quickly enough when anything to do comes his way. At the bowling crease his methods are distinctive. There is something very deliberate and methodical about them. Having marked off his starting point deliberately, yet quietly, some four or five yards from the bowling crease, he takes his stand on the spot with easy poise and pauses there always an appreciable space of time with the stillness of a statue till everything is quite ready. He does this with deliberation and without any semblance of flurry every time for each ball he sends down. Each ball is a separate shot from his magazine, carrying all the energy he can put into it. There is not the slightest suggestion of aggression in his actions up to this point, nor in the little change of feet which heralds the start of his approach to the bowling crease nor in his first one or two little steps. Then in a couple of high stepping strides he jumps towards the bowling crease, and, swinging his arm round swiftly, propels the ball with surprising speed through the air and with even more surprising speed off the pitch. He gives a wonderful finish and follow through to his delivery; in fact, his run and delivery are all finish. From the pavilion his delivery appears to be quite fair. He certainly is fast off the pitch, but does not come in the category of very fast bowlers. It is the element of surprise about his pace that makes him something different and an unfamiliar problem, perhaps, for batsmen. He also keeps a surprisingly good length, and aims straight at the wicket all the time. His bowling was a most interesting feature of the match.94

After an outright win over South Australia and two first innings victories over New South Wales the Queenslanders took the lead in the Sheffield Shield competition. Queensland went into the next match against Victoria with high hopes of gaining at least one Shield point and providing themselves with a great opportunity to win the Shield. If this could be achieved the *Sports Referee* (Brisbane) believed it would give a 'fillip' "to the grand old game."95

94 *The Sydney Mail*, 17 December 1930: 2.

95 *Sports Referee* (Brisbane), 20 December 1930: 12.
Figure 2.7. Gilbert involved in a mock trial during the Sydney game.

Figure 2.8. A welcome to Melbourne for the Queensland team.
In previewing the match The Sporting Globe provided an interesting insight:

Of such happy nature is Gilbert that he never wants to throw himself upon the ground and munch grass, or tear out his hair when things go wrong. He always sympathises with a fieldsman who misses a catch.

Eddie is enjoying his trip thoroughly but is taking everything quietly according to the manager Mr. L.A. Allen who is secretary of the Country Advisory Committee of the Queensland Cricket Association and a member of the executive of that body.

Gilbert is truant officer on Barambah Mission Station. The station has a team playing in the Murgon Association. All are natives but none is in Gilbert’s class.96

Queensland captain Gough won the toss and sent the Victorians in to bat on a good wicket in a decision that many believed was influenced by the points position in the Shield competition. It was seen by most judges as the ‘wrong’ decision. Before the match commenced Queensland, with eleven points from three games, were leading the Shield competition. Because of this it was suggested that the reason behind sending Victoria in to bat was "adopted with the idea of trying to restrict Victoria’s maximum nett gain to three points for a lead on the first innings."97 Under the system of points at the time, five points were given for an outright win; three for a win on the first innings; two for a tie, draw or abandoned game; and one for a loss on the first innings. A team losing outright obtained no points. There was some belief that it was unfair to award a team a point for a first innings loss and that in the match in progress Queensland were attempting to at least gain this one point by their actions.

96 The Sporting Globe, 17 December 1930: 1.

97 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 17 December 1930: 10.
This was refuted by the Queenslanders:

"Gough’s decision was made entirely on his expectation of how the pitch would play," said Mr. Allen.

"Though many expected the wicket to be good, Gough, in his inspection, found that it was a trifle soft and decided that the best course would be to send Victoria in.

"He thought that the pitch was one from which Ironmonger, the Victorian left-hand bowler, would receive assistance, and considered that it would be [best] to send Victoria in."98

This explanation was seen as absolving the Queensland captain from any suggestions regarding his motives in sending Victoria in to bat.

Victoria went on with the job and made a total of 474. In reply the Queensland batsmen failed badly, being dismissed for totals of 103 and 129, and the Northerners were defeated by an innings and 242 runs.

The features of the game were the bowling of Ironmonger, Oxenham and Blackie, and the batting of Keith Rigg and Jack Ryder. In the Victorian first innings Rigg compiled a valuable but defence-dominated 124, "without a chance and without a false stroke until 101, when he lifted a ball just clear of square-leg for two."99 Ryder's 114 contained no chances, "but he did not time the ball too well,"100 while a'Beckett’s 92 was "a mixture of good and bad strokes."101 When a'Beckett was 22 Gilbert missed a ‘ridiculously’ easy chance from him at slip.

Rigg and Ryder were involved in a prolific partnership, which yielded 209 runs.

Oxenham proved to be easily the best bowler for Queensland on a slow wicket in the first innings, and he secured 6 wickets for 92, off 43.4 overs, which included 14 maidens. He bore

---

98 The Herald (Melbourne), 20 December 1930: 5.
100 ibid.
101 ibid.
the brunt of the frequently changed bowling attack and was the only bowler who looked like getting wickets. Hurwood took 2 wickets for 115 while Bensted had 1 for 48 and Gilbert 1 for 78. Gilbert bowled the first three overs of the innings for one run, "and was keeping the ball on the spot" but "did not look dangerous later." His bowling was closely watched and The Brisbane Courier, of all papers, was to report that, "although his action was doubtful he made the ball fly." 

The Referee offered a different view when it reported that

...the crowd were interested in him on account of the pace he gets with such a short run. The general opinion concerning his action is that though it is one which naturally excites comment his delivery is perfectly fair. Gilbert was used for very short spells only.

Queensland went in to bat on a good wicket and under perfect weather conditions. Queensland crashed in two of the feeblest batting displays seen in a big match in Melbourne for many years. In the first innings total of 103 Gough and Bensted gave the best displays of batting and scored 19 and 20, respectively. Gilbert scored 5 before being caught by Ryder off the bowling of Blackie. The left-handed Ironmonger finished with 5 wickets for 29, off 10.6 overs.

Following on 371 in arrears, the Queenslanders performed only marginally better to be all out for 129. Bensted made a number of good off-side strokes before he was out for 40.

Gilbert did not trouble the scorers in an innings that was described by The Leader (Melbourne):

102 ibid.
103 ibid.
104 ibid.
Gilbert was again given a most cordial reception as he wended his way slowly to the wickets. The fieldsmen crowded close to his bat, and one of the crowd called out, "Get back a'Beckett," when the Australian Eleven player walked to within a few yards of the Queenslander's bat. a'Beckett refrained from accepting the advice, and to the chagrin of the spectators - who wanted the aboriginal to make some runs - caught Gilbert off the next ball bowled by Ironmonger from a softly-spoonied catch. 106

Ironmonger, in a fine piece of bowling, finished with 6 for 41, making his record for the match 11 for 80. Blackie also bowled very well and took 4 for 57 in the second innings. Between them they captured 18 of the 20 wickets to fall in the match.

The Referee summed up the match:

The match was a disappointment looked at from every angle, except of course to those Victorians to whom winning the Shield is all-important. The Northerners seem to save all their mistakes for Melbourne. The attendance was very disappointing - only 4767 on the first day and 5764 on the Friday...

Interest was added to the game because of Queensland's unbeaten record, and also because of the appearance of Eddie Gilbert, the Aboriginal fast bowler. The wicket was perfect at the start, but the ground might have been faster.

**SELECTION TROUBLES**

On the first day the topic of conversation was the difference of opinion between the Queensland selectors and the players as to who shall select the teams when on tour. The cause of the trouble was a telegram from the Q.C.A. selectors to F.J. Gough instructing him to omit Amos, to make Bourne 12th man, and to include Brew, who had been specially sent to replace Litster (injured).

The players met in protest and appointed the captain (Gough), R.K. Oxenham and F.C. Thompson as selection committee. They informed the manager (Mr. L. Allen) and decided to select Bourne, omit Brew and make Amos 12th man.

The manager accepted the players team under protest. He considered the matter a dispute between the Q.C.A. and the players and said that the relations between himself and the team were excellent.

The players hold that it is ridiculous for selectors a thousand miles off to decide as to the form of men they have not seen for some time. 107

---

106 The Leader (Melbourne), 27 December 1930: 2.

The Sporting Globe reported:

Those who knew what had happened before the Queensland team went south, were not surprised to hear of the trouble, which began in Sydney. Two things had sent the players away in a state of unrest. Several of the players were displeased that Gilbert, the aborigine was going. One player’s objection amounted to a threat that he would not make the trip if Gilbert went. In this he was not given a great deal of support, and no more was heard of it.108

Apparently it was Gough, the state captain, who had not wanted Gilbert in the touring team and stated he would resign rather than have him tour. Gough was alleged to have claimed that "Gilbert will interfere with the social side of the team."109

Gough did not carry out his threat to withdraw but had been very disturbed when it was announced that the State selectors would not appoint a tour selection committee. He remonstrated with two of the State selectors before leaving Brisbane but the Q.C.A. was determined to continue the procedure controversially adopted the season before. After the Sydney meeting of players where matters came to a head Gough tendered the manager his resignation as adviser to the Queensland selectors.

The Q.C.A. for a time declined to make an official statement on the dispute. The Herald (Melbourne) carried a report:

When asked today what the Queensland selection committee intended doing about its choice being ignored by the Shield team, a member of that body said:— "What can we do? We cannot put our team on to the field at revolver point. So far as I know at present, we intend to let the matter slide until the end of the tour unless there are further developments to-day."

When it was pointed out to him that the selection committee on the tour last year chose the teams, he said: "The change was made because in previous years there had always been trouble about the selection of teams by a touring selection committee. We thought that since the system caused disruption in the team it would be better if the whole of the onus should be thrown back on our shoulders. Apparently the new system has caused more trouble than the old. For the life of me I cannot see why the team should object to this system, especially Gough.


For the nine or 10 whose places are practically assured, it matters little who selects the team.

"The fact must be faced that we have the authority to select the Queensland teams against all the States. Even if you chose to put our case in the worst possible light, you can say no more than that the authority might not have been judiciously exercised, but that would be no justification for the open revolt of the team. To me the whole affair is inexplicable.

"One cannot blame men like Bourne, Gilbert and Leeson for stirring up the trouble. There are probably ringleaders in the team and our only redress against the men who have fomented the trouble can be obtained when the team returns to Queensland."

"Does that mean that some of these alleged ringleaders may be dropped for the remaining matches?" he was asked.

"It amounts to this, that you cannot reasonably expect a selection committee which has the backing of the Queensland Cricket Association to have its authority openly flouted and take it lying down. There must be discipline."

In a follow-up story the response of the players to the previous story was discussed. It stated:

The attitude of the players is that there are no "ringleaders." They are united in all decisions they have made and regret that friction should have arisen. There is no friction among the touring party itself.\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{110} The Herald (Melbourne), 18 December 1930: 10.

\textsuperscript{111} ibid., 19 December 1930: 8. Armstrong, op.cit., said:

When the tour finished, after a draw in Sydney and two embarrassing losses, the QCA held a series of inquiries which revealed: that Gough had wanted Gilbert made 12th man in Sydney, against the wishes of the selectors; that the eleven that played in Sydney and Melbourne had not been the one chosen by the selectors; that all the touring players had, in Melbourne, formed a "Players' Defence League," and taken up the responsibility of selection themselves; and that Gough and a number of the Queensland players and officials felt that Gilbert was a chucker.

After a series of meetings behind closed doors, the QCA announced that, unless the players they identified as the trouble makers apologised they would be suspended. Only Ron Oxenham did so and five players were suspended, and two others were threatened with suspension. The others, including Gilbert, were said to have been "dragged into the trouble".

...The dispute finally fizzled out, after the Queensland Chief Justice, Sir James Blair, acted as a mediator between the players and the QCA. All references to the players' suspensions were expunged from the records. :109.
The selectors, as a group, had not issued a statement at this time but it was suggested that, "when they do part of their explanation will be that owing to certain hostility to Gilbert they were afraid he would not get a fair deal, so they decided to select the teams themselves."\(^{112}\)

In this regard The Alert (Maryborough) was very blunt:

> The row has broken out between the selectors and the Queensland cricket team. As I told you before, the high brows, who had become public idols because they made a few runs or had taken a few wickets thought themselves too good to associate with an aboriginal on tour. He, though black, happens to be a popular idol, also because he happens to be able to take more wickets than anybody else in Queensland. It was amusing to learn that Thompson had some grouch against the Q.C.A., and he told people it would be a calamity to let Gough captain the team. He seems to have used Gough pretty considerably to help fight Thompson’s battles since that remark.\(^{113}\)

At a delegate meeting that was called in Brisbane only one selector, Mr. E.H. Hutcheon, was present.

A question was asked by Mr. J Bensted, father of Eric Bensted, the Queensland player. He condemned the methods, saying that Gough, Thompson and Oxenham were quite fit to select the teams on tour. Mr. Hutcheon interjected somewhat facetiously, "What about Eddie Gilbert?" to which Mr Bensted replied. "Well, he could do it better than the selectors here. He’s on the spot."\(^{114}\)

Eddie Gilbert was one of the signatories of a player’s agreement when they revolted against the selectors, "perhaps not realising the role he had in the selector’s initial decision."\(^{115}\) More than likely he felt obliged to sign the agreement although some players did not do so.

Robert Crawford, at Barambah, believed that the Shield player Thompson was behind many of the problems. He also had some definite opinions about the racial views and role of Thompson as it affected Gilbert:

---

\(^{112}\) The Sporting Globe, 24 December 1930: 8.

\(^{113}\) The Alert (Maryborough), 30 January 1931.

\(^{114}\) The Sporting Globe, 24 December 1930: 8.

\(^{115}\) ibid.
Thompson was a good cricketer but a 'cow' of a man. He was a High School Principal and would be paid for the school holidays and the trip away... Worst bugger I ever knew. He would have them bring out a whisky for 'drinks.'

Len Allen took Eddie into his own house and taught him etiquette. In a hotel in Sydney he [Thompson] deliberately sat at a table with Allen and Gilbert. Fish was served. He [Gilbert] called him [Allen] 'Ger.' "Is he using the right knife or am I?" Thompson never came near him much after that.\textsuperscript{16}

In a comment about Thompson, fellow State player Gordon Amos was to suggest that "he didn't mix in with us ordinarily like all the others."\textsuperscript{17} With regard to Eddie Gilbert, Amos was to recall:

He was quite all-right, good to travel with - a real little gentleman. I didn't notice that [there was any poor treatment] - it didn't affect me him being there. He could've come and had dinner with me any time he liked... He had his own room as far as I could remember. In Melbourne we stayed at the Windsor up near Government House. He was treated pretty well. They played jokes on him and everything, you know, it didn't affect Eddie. One of our players had a little squirting rubber ball with a long lead on it. Eddie come down to sit down at the breakfast table and the next thing you see this thing going up and down under his plate. This player had put it under the table cloth and with his hand down here going, and there's Eddie's plate going up and down. [Laugh] Just having fun on bit. But he took it all all-right [sic]. As far as I remember there were no problems with the team [and Gilbert].\textsuperscript{18}

In relation to the team 'revolt,' and as already indicated, at least one selector was to suggest that "the ringleaders-the whole team perhaps-will be punished by being dropped from the next match."\textsuperscript{19} However, it was considered that it was a pity that the whole affair "should have occurred when Queensland has reached its greatest success in the Shield competition."\textsuperscript{20} The Queensland players were reported as not being outwardly upset, "but the opinion has been

\textsuperscript{16} Robert Crawford, personal interview, op.cit.

\textsuperscript{17} Gordon Amos, personal interview, September 1991. The use of humour could be helpful in building team unity and relieving tensions. In the case of Gilbert it could help to win 'acceptance.'

\textsuperscript{18} ibid.

\textsuperscript{19} The Sporting Globe, 24 December 1930: 8.

\textsuperscript{20} ibid.
expressed that the dispute unconsciously upset the morale of the visitors.”

A story on Eddie Gilbert, which appeared in *The Sporting Globe* after the game highlighted the widespread interest that was focused on him.

**EDDIE GILBERT**

*A Remarkable Bowler From The North*

Melbourne cricket followers were keen to see Eddie Gilbert, the Queensland aborigine, in action in the Shield game against Victoria last week, and the general verdict was that he was a remarkable bowler - not because of outstanding ability, but because of the pace he got with an action that is anything but what we would expect in a fast bowler.

Small, and built on somewhat slender lines, Gilbert does not look the type of man to be a fast bowler. Still, he does get great pace with the minimum of effort. Poising himself carefully on his feet, he takes four or five short steps forward, brings his arm well over, and gets pace from the shoulders. As he delivers the ball he bends over to the left until his head almost reaches the ground, and as a result he does not get the run-through that we regard as essential with most fast bowlers. In fact, he stops almost dead. He has long arms, and this probably helps him.

Questions have been raised as to the fairness of Gilbert's delivery, but after watching him closely from several angles, I came to the conclusion that it was right, although at times there was suspicion about it. There is something of a throwing action about it, but one could not say that it was a throw. As umpires in three States have now passed his delivery as fair, we must regard it as such.

Gilbert is a very quiet and well-mannered young man, and one would judge by his demeanour that he is not the type of man to get flustered. He is very deliberate in all his movements, never hurrying—except, of course, when chasing the ball—and taking his time over everything. Even when walking out to bat his advance to the wickets is slow and deliberate, and his return to the pavilion appears to be more deliberate still.

Gilbert declares that he is "100 per cent Australian," and seems proud of the fact.

---

121 ibid.

Robert Crawford recalled a story which occurred in Melbourne and in its telling delights in the comic nature of the event. It was obviously a story that he and Eddie Gilbert had often talked about and gives a hint of the keen sense of humour that Gilbert possessed.

In Melbourne the team were all going to the pictures. Eddie had a cold and did not want to go. "I'll go to bed." — Too lonely on his own so went to the theatre where the team was...told the girl there he was a member of the Queensland Shield side. She said, "You can't go up there" and all the rest of it. But he said "I'm a member of it...I'll call the manager." [Usher] He [Manager], said "That's right. Don't you know that is — that's Eddie Gilbert." So the manager got a big box of chocolates and gave them to him. Eddie marches up..."So you decided to come." "Got too lonely, but look what you get for coming late." [Laugh] Eddie had a sense of humour. 

---

Figure 2.9. A cartoon summary of the Queensland versus Victoria match December 1930.

---

123 Robert Crawford, personal interview, op. cit.
The next match was to be played against South Australia, in Adelaide. Both teams were "becoming very dissatisfied with the listing of a Sheffield Shield match on Christmas Day, year after year."\(^{124}\) Before the match the Queensland selectors telegrammed the team they had selected to play but this was ignored. Instead Gough, Oxenham and Thompson again selected the team despite the threat of disciplinary action from the State selectors.

In the match Queensland batting again broke down badly. South Australia scored 305 while Queensland could only muster totals of 124 and 117 in reply. The South Australian batsman, Nitschke, played an innings of 142 runs which put his team in a solid position. After Nitschke had scored his century he broke his bat in driving Gilbert, "but continued with unabated vigour when furnished with a new one."\(^{125}\) Oxenham once again bowled well for Queensland, "kept an irreprouachable length, and kept the scoring down to a minimum."\(^{126}\) He ended up with 6 for 51, off 24.7 overs, 12 maidens. With regard to the Queensland bowlers Gilbert proved to be the most difficult to play of the remainder. Gilbert ended up taking 2 for 82, off 23 overs, and Thurlow managed to take 1 for 49.

Of Gilbert's bowling on the first day the *Adelaide Advertiser* was to report:

> He obtains his pace almost solely from his arm, assisted by body swing, and, although he bowled into the strong gusty breeze, he maintained good pace through the air and off the pitch. The aborigine bowled with practically no outfield, the only fieldsmen in front of the wicket being a mid-off and a mid-on close in. The rest of the men were behind the wicket—three slips, a man down the gully, one at fine leg, and another at short square-leg.\(^{127}\)

Queensland's first innings total of 124 on a 'sticky' wicket saw Thompson score 50 useful runs while Goodwin scored 21 and Brew made 24. Chief wicket-taker for South Australia was


\(^{125}\) *The Brisbane Courier*, 26 December 1930: 5.

\(^{126}\) ibid.

\(^{127}\) *Adelaide Advertiser*, 26 December: 7.
Grimmett. Gilbert, after being indisposed with a heavy cold since the end of the South Australian innings, was required to bat "and was called upon to shed the rugs and over-coats in which he was wrapped." ^128

In the second innings Queensland put in yet another dismal performance with the bat on a bowler’s wicket to be all out for 117. Thompson did not bat because of injury and Gough made 36. Grimmett wrought havoc among the Queensland batsmen, taking 5 wickets for 31 to cap an excellent match for him.

Gilbert was to provide the crowd with some ‘entertainment’ when he batted, as the Adelaide Chronicle pointed out:

> The aboriginal caused great amusement by his antics at the crease. When a single to Goodwin left him to face Grimmett, he shook his head sadly, and prepared for the worst. The first ball he received caused some concern until, after turning round in bewilderment several times, he found it resting between his legs and the stumps. He scratched his head in indecision after ineffectual attempts to hit Grimmett’s slows, but after weathering a few he mustered courage and tried the effect of a swing. To his surprise and the delight of the crowd he sent the ball back past the bowler into the deep field. So eager was Gilbert to get away from Grimmett that he did not bother to complete the second run, turning round when three-quarters of the way down the wicket, and bolting back to the bowler’s end, "one short" being signalled. He was finally dismissed by Waite, whom he skied to Deverson at long-off. ^129

Many years later Eddie Gilbert related a story from this game to ‘Paddy’ Wharton. It is another example of Gilbert’s sense of humour.

> He and Thurlow were the two men in. Clarrie Grimmett was bowling...Eddie the batter. He [Gilbert] said Grimmett bowled the ball and it come this way and it come that way and all of a sudden it dropped straight down there like that and he missed it and it went for a bye and Thurlow was yelling out — half-way down the wicket — "Run you bugger, run." [Laughter] ^130

---

^128 ibid., 27 December 1930: 8.

^129 ibid., 1 January, 1931: 22.

At the end of a reasonably unsuccessful tour Gilbert returned to the settlement. It had been a trip which was not without a deal of controversy and pressure for Gilbert.

Towards the end of December, and while he was away on tour, there was some suggestion that Eddie Gilbert would be moved away from Barambah. The South Burnett Times carried a story about these plans for Eddie.

**Gilbert’s Future**

**Will he be moved to Brisbane?**

"If Eddie Gilbert were brought to Brisbane he would have to be placed under some responsible employer. I could not consent to his being brought to Brisbane merely for the sake of his cricket".

This was the reply made by the Chief Protector of Aborigines (Mr. J. Bleakley) when he was questioned that Gilbert should be transferred to the Purga settlement outside of Ipswich in order that he would be closer to Brisbane for the big cricket scene.

Mr. Bleakley said that the suggestion was made by Alderman T. Shephenson of Ipswich when making a speech at the Christmas festivities at the Purga settlement.

Mr. Bleakley’s reply at the time was that he would not be game to go near Barambah again if he took Gilbert away from there. He was a popular hero.

Speaking more seriously later, Mr. Bleakley said the matter of bringing Gilbert nearer to Brisbane had been discussed on a number of occasions. He was willing to do all that he could in the matter provided a responsible employer were found for Gilbert and proper supervision over him was possible. The cricket season, however, was drawing to an end, and it was not likely that anything would be done until the next season commenced.131

---

131 The South Burnett Times, 9 January 1931.
This brought a swift response from the Superintendent at Barambah.

The Chief Protector of Aboriginals
Brisbane

My attention has been drawn to an News Item in the Brisbane Courier of Saturday that Eddie Gilbert is likely to be transferred to Purga so that he may play with the Ipswich Cricket Association.

The Ipswich Cricket Association are aspiring very high are they not, for Gilbert to go to Ipswich to play Cricket would be a step in the wrong direction. The Ipswich Association cannot produce players of the calibre of most of our players in the South Burnett Association. The prestige of the South Burnett Association cannot be challenged outside Brisbane and there is no individual Club in Brisbane who could beat them. This has been proved. I am at the present time in communication with Sydney for the Kippax team to play two games when they visit Queensland at Easter. One game to be played at Barambah against aboriginals only and the other a Murgon against The South Burnett Association which will include about 4 Aboriginals. To transfer Gilbert to Ipswich would not be done without a Protest from The Barambah Club and also the District Association.

If it had not been for Barambah and the Concert party here it would have been impossible for Gilbert to go south and even play in Brisbane.

I would however send Gilbert to Brisbane to play with a Brisbane club should that be arranged Gilbert could get all the practice there he required but to Ipswich No.

The West Indies Team will be in Brisbane next month. Could you get in communication with the Q.C.A. and see if it yet would not be too late to play a two days match with that team in Brisbane with the Aboriginals. They would give them a good game. I would send a white Captain with them [them].

W. Porteus Semple (Signature)
Superintendent

Shortly afterwards, and in the face of the concern expressed on the settlement, Bleakley was to state that "there was no intention of send Gilbert to Purga." The comments, he stated, were made as a 'joke' remark.

---

133 ibid.
134 ibid.
On January 10th, 12th, 13th and 14th, 1931, the West Indian team played Queensland on the Brisbane Cricket Ground at Woolloongabba. The idea behind a change from the Exhibition Grounds was to establish cricket's headquarters on its own grounds. At this time the grounds at Woolloongabba had "only one old grandstand, with very hard seats," but a good wicket was prepared for the match. Before this change the Exhibition Ground had been used for seventeen consecutive representative games.

On an instruction from the executive of the Q.C.A., the selectors "disregarded the contentious incident of the southern tour, in arriving at their selection." Prior to this decision they had been on the receiving end of a fair amount of criticism. Leading up to the match there was some speculation that Gilbert might not be selected for the state team.

No official statement on behalf of the selectors has been made, as they are prevented from discussing matters with the Press by a rule, recently adopted, but it is learned from a reliable source that the excuse will be given for Gilbert's omission that he is purely a shock bowler, and is only good for a couple of overs.

He was not omitted from the team.

Grant, the West Indian captain, won the toss and the visitors went in to bat. The first wicket put on 75 runs and the whole side were out for 309. The first 10 minutes of play yielded 11 runs, all off Eddie Gilbert. Except for Constantine, who made 75 in 59 minutes, "the tourists failed to live up to their reputation for fast scoring." The first ball that Constantine received from Gilbert was hit unceremoniously to the square leg fence. Not content with this, a short time later he swung Gilbert forward off square-leg for a beautiful six. "It was the first time Eddie had had that experience in big cricket, and it had a queer effect on him. He ran up the pitch and

---

136 The Referee, 14 January 1931: 17.
137 Sydney Morning Herald, 9 January 1931: 15.
138 The Brisbane Courier, 12 January 1931: 5.
shook hands with Constantine. This pleased the crowd."\textsuperscript{139} It was a rare piece of sportsmanship that Gilbert was to display. There they stood, two black brothers, "one from the other side of the world,"\textsuperscript{140} as the crowd cheered the effort. Of Constantine’s shot it was rather unkindly suggested "that only a negro could sight the ball."\textsuperscript{141}

With regard to his meeting with Gilbert in the match Constantine later wrote, in his book, Cricket and I:

I did not find him difficult, as he was rather lacking in subtlety, and the wicket as usual was so tame that sheer pace by itself could do little. All the time Gilbert slings them down as fast as he can, and it can easily happen that a batsman who is not careful may find himself bowled out by the fifth or sixth ball of an over when Gilbert has worked up to his best pace. I watched his body-action off-break and hit him for a good 6 near square-leg. He walked down to shake hands with me and tell me that no one had ever hit him for a 6 before.\textsuperscript{142}

In addition to Constantine’s effort, sound innings were also played by Roach (42), Martin (38), Birkett (49), and Grant (28). Oxenham performed impressively for Queensland and bowled 11 maidens in 28 overs without taking a wicket. Gilbert, who bowled with ‘great heart,’ was to prove to be the outstanding performer. He took 5 wickets for 65, off 19 overs and "with a more experienced man behind the wickets he would have secured better figures."\textsuperscript{143} Several chances were dropped off his bowling and he did not take a wicket until his eleventh over. At one stage during his bowling stint he gave the crowd a thrill when he "repeatedly beat Roach with his pace."\textsuperscript{144}

\textsuperscript{139} The Sporting Globe, 14 January 1931: 9.
\textsuperscript{140} The Gympie Times, 31 October 1987: 18.
\textsuperscript{141} ibid.
\textsuperscript{142} Learie N. Constantine. Cricket and I. London: Philip Allan, 1933: 149.
\textsuperscript{143} The Brisbane Courier, 12 January 1931: 5.
\textsuperscript{144} Sports Referee (Brisbane), 10 January 1931: 6.
When Gilbert resumed after the tea adjournment the first ball he bowled was a wide. It is rarely he does this. The next ball Birkett drove for four, and the following he snicked to Thurlow at third man, a smart catch being taken. Birkett just failed to reach his half-century.  

Gilbert dismissed Grant with a fast, short-pitched ball which was put ‘softly’ into Mossop’s hands at point. The West Indian innings was ended when Scott was bowled by Gilbert for a ‘duck.’ Next best of the other bowlers was Bensted, who secured 2 for 34.

With regard to Eddie’s first innings bowling performance The Sporting Globe said:

Gilbert proved that he is one of Australia’s best fast bowlers by taking five for 65 in 19 overs. He bowled with great speed, and worried the batsmen with a ball which swung towards them from the off. One batsman admitted that he had not seen several balls from the aborigine, whose short run had them unprepared for the kind of ball which arrived.

Queensland commenced their innings badly with 4 wickets down for 28 runs. At this stage three of the State’s best batsmen, Gough, Bensted and Oxenham, were back in the pavilion after brief stays at the batting crease. There was some indication that the home side would not reach a hundred, but a fighting innings by Goodwin, "characterised by crisp strokes on both sides of the wicket, assisted by commendable efforts on the part of Brew and Mossop, however, prevented a debacle." Goodwin scored 60 runs in a ‘sheet-anchor’ role, while Brew contributed 30 runs. The Queensland total was 167. Constantine was the bowler who figured prominently and at the expense of the Queensland batsmen. At one stage he had 3 for 5, off 7 overs, and ended up taking 4 for 33. Gilbert was well-received by the crowd when he went out to bat and there was speculation as to whether he would take vengeance on Constantine for the ‘six’ hit off him. At one stage during his innings of five runs Gilbert “slipped and stood almost on his head much to

145 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 12 January 1931: 8.
147 The Brisbane Courier, 12 January 1931: 4.
Gilbert started well. After playing Constantine quietly, he was tossed down a slow one. The Barambah player promptly swung it to leg. It stopped a foot or so from the boundary, but four were run. He added a single...Gilbert did not know much about Scott's slows, however, and after walking in front of two balls he was out leg before wicket.\footnote{ibid.}

In their second innings of 265 the West Indies started in a sensational manner with Roach being dismissed by Gilbert before he had scored. All of the batsmen found Gilbert’s pace disconcerting and Roach later admitted that "he did not see some of Gilbert’s deliveries after they hit the pitch." Oxenham contributed to the action with a couple of l.b.w. decisions and the visitors were in trouble at 4 for 38. Grant had an escape when Gilbert missed a fast snick through slips off the bowling of Thurlow, but Birkett was out to a remarkable catch in the slips by Gilbert. In this dismissal "the ball came low at lightning speed, but diving sideways the Aborigine held a catch."\footnote{The Gympie Times, 13 January 1931: 4.} Later in the match Gilbert bowled Grant (26) with a beautiful ball which took his middle stump. After bowling only 4 overs Gilbert left the field "owing to a strain in one of his arms."\footnote{The Brisbane Courier, 13 January 1931: 4.} His team undoubtedly felt his loss although Hunte and Sealy had begun to engage in a ‘stonewalling’ period of play. When Constantine entered the scene he hit hard "and made all the bowlers look third rate"\footnote{The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 14 January 1931: 15.} on his way to compiling 97 runs. Other main ‘run-getters’ included Birkett with 41, and Grant and Hunte with 28 each. Gilbert returned to the field later in the innings, and, although he did very little bowling, he ended up with 2 for 26. Bensted took 3 for 57, Thurlow 2 for 88 and Oxenham 2 for 34.
Gilbert's injury, which was 'assumed' to be a strained shoulder muscle, appeared to cause very little concern despite some initial reticence by the Q.C.A. officials to inform the media.  

Gough also has a ready explanation for the shoulder trouble which caught Gilbert unawares in the West Indies game. The ex-captain doesn't regard it very seriously, pointing out that such an injury would probably be the result of jerking the arm when throwing in from the field.

Gilbert is so small, and is so prodigal with his strength when playing cricket that he may quite easily crack up under the strain. Queensland cricket followers don't want to see that happen to a young man who gives promise of doing great things for the State, and some would like him to take things a little easier.

Queensland's second innings amounted to 188 runs. Goodwin scored 54, Mossop 37 and Brew made 25. When Gilbert came in to bat he had five men clustered in the slips field. He raised a cheer when he edged Francis away to fine leg for 2. He went on to score 14, not out. Bowling honours were once again taken by Constantine, who secured 4 for 23. The other bowlers to take wickets were Scott 2 for 79, Francis 2 for 21, and Martin 2 for 20. The West Indies won the match by 219 runs.

During the summer of 1930-31 Gilbert was a favourite of the Queensland crowd. One of his appearances is remembered:

The ninth wicket of a Queensland innings had fallen and the last man in was making his way from the pavilion to the gate opening on to the ground.

As he emerged in bright sunshine, in flannels, maroon cap and gleaming skin, the crowd gave him an ovation which lasted all the way to the wicket.

When he scored his first run shortly afterwards, one could be forgiven for thinking he had completed a century, so vociferous was the applause.

The crowd, many of whom would have found the price of admission difficult to come by in those hard times, had flocked to the ground mainly to see him in action, not of course as a batsman but as a bowler.

---

Gilbert had made a favourable impression on many people, including good judges of cricket. In addition to this support there were some calls for his inclusion in the Australian Test team. For example, The Daily Mail (Brisbane) ran a story under the heading: 'GILBERT'S TEST CLASS.'

Australia is without a successful fast bowler at present, and in view of the imperative need to have a man of pace to blend the attack for the test matches against South Africa next season, the good form of Eddie Gilbert, the Queensland bowler, warrants the Australian selectors experimenting with him for the fourth test match against the West Indies.

Gilbert is outstanding in all his qualifications, when compared to Wall and his other rivals in inter-State and inter-national cricket this season. He has captured 20 wickets for 567 runs, for an average of 28.35 – a fine record when one remembers that he has been on the beaten side twice and against a heavy scoring opposition.156

The Referee was to report that Gilbert had improved his game after the southern tour. It posed the question: "Is Eddie Gilbert the best fast bowler in Australia to-day?"157 The article also said: "He has increased his run to the wicket one or two steps, and appears to bring his bowling arm over a little faster."158 The Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals outlined the success of the Barambah cricketers by stating: "The Barambah cricket team had a victorious run, principally through the very fast bowling of Eddie Gilbert, a full-blood, who won his way to interstate honours."159

In mid-January 1931, the Kilkivan-Wondai District Cricket Association held a Special General Meeting. The meeting was called because: "Club delegates to the Association had been instructed to vote against the inclusion of the Barambah Settlement Club in the competition."160

156 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 12 January 1931: 8.
157 The Referee, 14 January 1931: 17.
158 ibid.
160 The South Burnett Times, 12 January 1931.
There was more than a little evidence to suggest that some of the teams were looking for an excuse to exclude the successful Barambah team from the competition. The outcome of the meeting was not reported but it eventuated that the club did continue to play in the competition for that season.

Figure 2.10. Gilbert misses a chance given by Constantine off the bowling of Thurlow.

While Gilbert was back on the settlement the death occurred of his friend Collie Sheridan, a well-known footballer, cricketer and runner. Sheridan was considered to be a top-class cricketer who could have been close to making the State team if given the same opportunity as Gilbert. The South Burnett Times reported the incident and in so doing gave a small insight into the mix of white and traditional values that was present on the settlement and to which Gilbert was exposed.
Ab. Cricketer Killed.

Whilst the Barambah aboriginal cricketers were returning to the Settlement on Sunday night, after playing against Murgon, one of their number Collie Sheridan, aged 21 years, was run over and killed by the motor truck on which the State player Gilbert, was also travelling. It appeared that the team left for home on the Settlement truck and was nearing Barambah, Sheridan attempted to alight but fell and rolled under the truck, the rear wheel passing over his head. It was badly crushed, and he was rushed to the Settlement Hospital. Dr. Davidson, of Murgon, was soon on the scene but Sheridan was past human aid. He was a well-known cricketer and an outstanding player of the Barambah football team.

...The funeral cortège was headed by the Barambah cricket team in cricket togs, headed by Eddie Gilbert.

...The sight of practically 500 aborigines weeping and chanting mournful funeral dirges was one that will not easily be forgotten by the muster of white visitors from Murgon.\(^{161}\)

\(^{161}\) *ibid.*, 30 January 1931.
One resident of Barambah, Rita Huggins, remembered the sad event and its later effect on the inmates:

He had his girlfriend and she was waiting there. He saw her...they had a lorry...as he tried to jump -- most old people said that his trousers must have got caught on the truck....The truck went over him. When we went swimming in the Creek as children we had to have an elder child, we used to play up and she used to say, "go down there with who" -- never mention names, name of that person. They don't do that when he got killed."something will get you at night time." We never dared go there.162

A short time after the death of Sheridan the last Sheffield Shield match of the season was to be played against Victoria. The match was abandoned without a ball being bowled, on account of rain. Before the match Gilbert became the fourth withdrawal from the originally selected team due to "a recurrence of the shoulder strain sustained in the recent match against the West Indies."163 The Referee reported that this may have been "a convenient let-out."164

All of those who signed the players’ agreement dropped out of the team against Victoria either compulsorily or voluntarily, and it is unlikely Gilbert would be anxious to depart from an agreement made with his team mates.

Leaving that supposition out of it, there can be no doubt that Gilbert did hurt his shoulder. There was also a rumor [sic] that he had strained one of his legs...That rumor [sic], however, had very little foundation in fact.

In the Adelaide game Gilbert did a tremendous amount of bowling and his trouble at the finish was just plain weariness. Any player who put the energy into bowling that Gilbert does would tire quickly.165

Victoria won the Sheffield Shield with 16 points, while New South Wales scored 15 and Queensland 13. For Queensland the season had been one of successes and disappointments.

Eddie Gilbert, considered Queensland's most promising youngster, took 15 Shield wickets for an

162 Rita Huggins, personal interview, op.cit. Several other informants recalled the passing of Collie Sheridan when describing the life of Eddie Gilbert. Because of their shared experiences such events have special significance to Aboriginal people and Collie's sister (Nellie Sheridan) found it difficult to describe his death.

163 The South Burnett Times, 30 January 1931.

164 The Referee, 4 February 1931: 7.

165 ibid.
Eddie Gilbert, considered Queensland's most promising youngster, took 15 Shield wickets for an average of 33.46, while Oxenham took 24 wickets at 16.87. Eddie's batting average was 6.42, his highest score being 24.166

In summarising the season Mr. E. Hutcheon, in his book on the History of Queensland Cricket, has written:

The outstanding events of the year were the finding of Eddie Gilbert, an aborigine from the Barambah settlement—who bowled very finely and very consistently for Queensland in her Shield engagements and against the West Indies—he became a very popular figure; also the great total scored by Cecil Thompson against New South Wales.167

Further speculation about the future career of Eddie Gilbert was made and 'Old,' of The Bulletin, repeated some of the earlier outlined plans for him:

In view of his success in Sheffield Shield cricket, there is a movement afoot in Brisbane to bring the young abo. bowler, Gilbert, down from the settlement of his people at Barambah to Brisbane, the idea being that by playing in grade cricket he will improve out of sight, and thus become an acquisition to Australian cricket. The Protector of Abo. is said to have intimated that he will have no objection provided Gilbert is given suitable employment with a responsible person. Still, I hope it won't be done. The aboriginal athlete has been too much exploited in Queensland for the benefits of others than himself. Two instances that come to mind were the handling of sprinter Charley Samuels and boxer Jerry Jerome for the benefits of mean whites, who battened on to their earnings...168

In February 1931, Mr. Schmidt, on behalf of the Gympie Cricket Association, asked the Kilkivan delegates at a meeting for their approval for Eddie Gilbert to play in Gympie against the Kippax-Bradman team in April. The delegates stated that they had no objection, "but permission would have to be asked of the superintendent of the Barambah mission."169 At this time Gilbert was still suffering from a shoulder injury although it was thought he would be able to play. The South

167 Hutcheon, op.cit., 172.
169 The South Burnett Times, 20 February 1931.
Burnett Times later outlined the situation:

A letter from Mr. W. Semple, superintendent of the Aboriginal Settlement, states that should he receive the necessary certificate from his medical adviser he would play in Townsville against the southern cricketers and would also play in Gympie. A subsequent letter, however, stated that Gilbert must refrain from bowling in any further matches this season...

The writer, however, mentioned Willieboy, who was regarded as the best all-rounder in the South Burnett.

...next to Gilbert, [Willieboy] was looked upon as the best bowler.

He was particularly dangerous with the new ball, and the Gilbert-Willieboy bowling combination could not be beaten.\(^{170}\)

The letter seemed to give support to the view that Eddie Gilbert was being controlled and manipulated in his career. The fact that he was not interviewed or his opinion sought lends support to this view. Don Bradman was to play in this match and there was some interest in a likely contest between Bradman and Gilbert. This was not to be the case and the injury to Gilbert proved to be a convenient excuse for his non-participation in the match. Robert Crawford displayed strong feelings and seemed sure of his facts as he recalled:

The Kippax team was made up of different players. The Kippax team went to play at Gympie. I picked Eddie Gilbert. Bradman: "I'm not facing Gilbert for anyone in Gympie." He refused point blank. "Leave him out and I'll play."\(^{171}\)

Meanwhile, *The Referee*, in speculating on the selection of the Australian Cricket team and under the heading of, ‘Who’ll be the fast Bowler?’, suggested that, "it may be that the natty young aboriginal of Queensland, E. Gilbert, will be the man."\(^{172}\) Although his performances were good it is doubtful whether he was considered a true Test candidate. The reasons for this were probably many and varied, and apart from any racial influences, would have included the fact that he was ‘new’ to first class cricket; his performances on the southern pitches were not particularly

\(^{170}\) ibid., 13 March 1931.

\(^{171}\) Robert Crawford, personal interview, *op.cit*.

\(^{172}\) *The Referee*, 18 March 1931: 1.
impressive; he was labelled as a 'shock' bowler and useful for only a few overs; and, there were allegations of throwing that were continually circulating, and which proved to be a constant talking point for many cricket supporters.

With the cricket season almost ended The South Burnett Times reported that a Brisbane cricket team, the Brisbane Branch of General Motors Corporation, "proposed to journey to Barambah Settlement both on Good Friday and Easter Saturday, there to try conclusions with the aboriginal team." 173

The emergence of Eddie Gilbert had certainly generated some 'outside' interest in the cricketers at Barambah. It was an interest that reflected 'kindly' on the South Burnett area as a whole.

In contrast to the positive images presented of an Aborigine playing Shield cricket was an article which appeared in Smith's Weekly in February 1931. It was full of the common stereotypes that white people had about Aborigines.

Lazy he may be, of a low mentality granted, but withal Jacky is at least a good sportsman. Have you ever seen black brother lose his temper in a game? I think not. See him on the football field in a hard and hopeless match; witness him fight a losing battle in the ring; watch him turn up a deuce when the bank was his. And always he is ready to laugh in the face of misfortune--rarely does he show "dirt." Gentleman! I give you a toast: To Jacky, a dinkum Australian. May his dark skin never hide from you the fair sportsman underneath. 174

---

173 The South Burnett Times, 3 April 1931.

174 Smith's Weekly, 7 February 1931: 3. It is interesting to note that in February 1935 a reporter from Smiths' Weekly rang up wanting to speak to Gilbert. Semple was to report to the Chief Protector:

I do not allow Natives into the Office to speak over the telephone, never have done so and do not think it a good practice. Neither do I think that Gilbert should speak to a newspaper reporter and preferably to Smith's Weekly.
CHAPTER III
A LEGEND CREATED

In mid-September 1931, a special meeting of the Kilkivan-Wondai District Cricket Association was held at the Australian Hotel, Murgon. The meeting had been called to consider a protest against the bowling of Eddie Gilbert on the ground that it is "considered too dangerous on the concrete wickets."¹

Mr. J. Lane formally moved the motion on behalf of the Murgon Club. He said that the club decided to enter the protest on the grounds that there was a "danger to young players of meeting Gilbert on the concrete wickets."²

In seconding the motion, Mr. W. Bischoff stated that

...the question had been fully discussed at the Club meeting and the motion was not actuated by any feeling of malice against Gilbert or the Abo. Club. They had not got Gilbert "set" in any way. The Club was losing some of their players and there were a number of places to be filled which would have to be taken by young players and they did not think it was right that these youngsters should be asked to meet Gilbert who was doing more harm than good to Association cricket. There are some players who refuse to bat against Gilbert, and he could not blame them, as in the present state of things generally if a young man was even temporarily incapacitated it might mean losing his job and there is no compensation fund to draw on in cricket. They would like to see Gilbert continue to play and it is a pity he cannot be transferred to some place where the game is played on turf wickets. It is a pity to lose a player of that class but they must consider the young players.³

Mr. Bourne, of the Goomeri Club, was of the opinion that the local Association could not afford "to discourage young players."⁴ He further stated that some of their players are quite willing to meet Gilbert, "but there is no doubt he is dangerous to the young players."⁵

¹ The South Burnett Times, 12 September 1931.
² ibid.
³ ibid.
⁴ ibid.
⁵ ibid.
Mr. Baxter, of the Kilkivan Club, was to indicate that his Club supported the motion but thought it was "a pity to bar a man because he is too good." He went on to indicate that the 'boys' were scared of him.

The Association secretary, Mr. Stafford, in supporting some of the other speaker's remarks, went much further when he said:

Regarding Gilbert's bowling, he said it is not only a question of bowling—"it's a question of throwing". After Gilbert came back from the southern tour he was most dangerous, and he did not bowl, he threw the ball, and he (the speaker) was prepared to stand on that statement. "I say the last two overs he bowled to Baxter were deliberate throws, and that is where the danger comes in," he said. They must protect their young players, and it is not fair to expect them to stand up to it. Stafford even went so far as to suggest that Gilbert "would be no-balled this season for that reason."8

Mr. Crawford, one of the two Barambah club delegates, was next to speak.

There are certain players who are afraid of Gilbert but they are an A. Grade Association. If they are going to play A. Grade cricket they must expect to meet first-class players; if not get into B. Grade. It appears that Murgon is going to get out if Gilbert bowls, but why should he be barred on that account even if some of his balls are dangerous? A number of their players are leaving and if Gilbert is debarred from playing they would have to withdraw from the Association. It is no use talking about getting him transferred to some place where turf wickets are available; jobs cannot be found for white cricketers at the present time. It had been said that the officials had instructed Gilbert to bowl "at" certain players; he gave that statement the lie direct: Gilbert had taken instructions only from his captain. It was unfortunate that a player had been injured but there was the risk of first-class cricket.9

Mr. Lawson, the other Barambah delegate, naturally enough supported Mr. Crawford's remarks.

He said that it had already been proved in Brisbane that "Gilbert did not throw, though it is

6 ibid.
7 ibid.
8 ibid.
9 ibid.
admitted that he is dangerous at times."\textsuperscript{10} It was also suggested that it was ‘useless’ to play in the competition "when Gilbert could not get any bowling."\textsuperscript{11}

Mr. Lane (Murgon), who had his hand broken by Gilbert, said that "although he was injured by Gilbert’s bowling he had the highest regard for him as a player and would be prepared to travel in his company anywhere."\textsuperscript{12} These comments regarding Eddie Gilbert’s personality were endorsed by Messrs. Bourne and Baxter and "all delegates were unanimous that the proposal to debar Gilbert was solely on account of the danger to young players."\textsuperscript{13}

After all the discussion the motion was put and carried, the Barambah delegates dissenting. Mr. Crawford then rose to state that "the Barambah Club would withdraw from the Association"\textsuperscript{14} in the hope of being able to find other avenues in which Gilbert would not be penalised. The meeting requested that he reconsider the decision and he "agreed to defer the final answer for a few days."\textsuperscript{15}

The occurrence at Murgon was to prove of great interest to many newspapers, which carried the story. The Australian Cricketer, in a report, mentioned how those cricketers "who have batted on a narrow concrete wicket could easily realise how intimidating a bowler with the pace of Eddie Gilbert could be."\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{10} ibid.

\textsuperscript{11} ibid.

\textsuperscript{12} ibid. Lane returned to playing cricket both with and against Gilbert.

\textsuperscript{13} ibid.

\textsuperscript{14} ibid. Crawford later indicated also that the team was "not favorably placed owing to some of our younger players being out." (Eddie Gilbert, personal file, Department of Community Services, 1988, letter dated 15 September 1931).

\textsuperscript{15} ibid.

\textsuperscript{16} The Australian Cricketer, October 1931.
The narrowness of the wicket usually makes the bowler bowl right on the wicket, and, with the swing he has developed, Gilbert could be most disconcerting, despite the fact that he has done little harm to batsmen in the three years he has played for Barambah Club.\footnote{ibid.}

When Gilbert bowled from his short run he usually was in a crouch as he delivered the ball. Consequently the ball usually had a flat trajectory and usually bounced low enough to hit the stumps. There were exceptions, as Doug Goodchild of Murgon recalled:

> I seen him bowling on a concrete wicket and two or three balls - he never tried to bump a ball - but the balls went over the batters' head - it hit a crack or something like that and they wanted to stop him from bowling on concrete.\footnote{ibid.}

The Referee, under the heading of 'Ban on Gilbert' reported that the outcome of the controversy was that "the Barambah club has dropped out of the competition altogether."\footnote{The Referee, 23 September 1931: 22.} The 'Murgon Correspondent,' of the Sports Referee (Brisbane), was to report:

> It is now learned on good authority that Barambah will approach the Murgon Association with the object of affiliation, taking part in the fixtures if possible, or, as an alternative, affiliation without participating in the fixtures, but making provision for Gilbert to play in representative teams from the association. It is common knowledge locally that quite a number of players in the Murgon Association are willing to play against Gilbert, and do not approve of the other association's ruling.\footnote{Sports Referee (Brisbane), 19 September 1931: 11.}

The Murgon and District Association competition mentioned in the article was one that took in "a large number of smaller country centres."\footnote{ibid.}

Because of the concerns that Eddie Gilbert would not "be able to get any match practice in his own district"\footnote{ibid.} the issue of moving him to Brisbane was once again raised. However, there was to be no quick response by the Q.C.A. to look after the 'cricketing interests' of Gilbert.
The Referee thought that Eddie Gilbert's friend, Len Allen, might be keeping an eye on the situation as Allen lived in the Toombul electorate and it was considered that "Toombul would be only too pleased to find a place for Gilbert if available for Brisbane games." Despite the suggestion, Gilbert received no offers to play in Brisbane.

In a belated attempt to end the controversy a delegate meeting of the Association attempted "to secure a promise from the Barambah Club that Gilbert would bowl only at half pace in competition matches."^24

An article by 'Five Ways' in The Bulletin suggested:

His own district association recently banned the darkie as too dangerous on country wickets, but an appeal to their feelings and the plea that it was better that a few unknown patriots should become hospital cases than that Gilbert's services be lost to the State for want of practice prevailed.^25

It was apparent that the publicity that the banning of Eddie Gilbert caused did not reflect favourably upon the local cricket Association and aroused a great deal of sympathy for Gilbert in the wider community. If correspondence by Superintendent Semple to the Deputy Chief Protector is any guide then this support was to be also displayed by many white people in the local area.

The Settlement team have been asked to play in the B. Grade fixtures here. B. Grade is much stronger than A. Grade as most of the players left to play A. Grade so as to play against Gilberts [sic] bowling. Much ill feeling has been raised amongst the white people owing to Gilbert being barred. He has invitations From Wooroolin, Kingaroy and the Gympie clubs to play with them if he could get a game locally. 7 teams have entered in the B. grade fixtures and only 3 A. Grade. ^26

The issue was resolved when Barambah joined the Murgon and District Association B. grade

23 The Referee, 23 September 1931: 22.

24 The Australian Cricketer, October 1931.


26 Eddie Gilbert, personal file, Department of Community Services, 1988, memorandum, number 06372147, October 1931.
competition. Eddie Gilbert returned to playing and "mowing down the wickets." In the early part of October, "he took nine for 27 against Wondai team, and hit up 66, including 11 fours and two sixes." The debate concerning Gilbert's participation in the Kilkivan-Wondai District Cricket Association was not enough for him to be excluded from the Murgon District Association representative team to play against Taabinga Cricket Association. The match was played at Taabinga and resulted in a first innings' win for the Murgon team by 87 runs. Gilbert finished with the splendid figures of 6 for 20, off twelve overs, including two maidens. Stuhmcke (27) and Allen (20) were the only home batsmen to reach double figures, the innings yielding 112 runs, to which the visitors replied with 199. Jeddes top-scored with a nicely compiled 68 and Gilbert scored 18, not out.

With the career of Eddie Gilbert in the spotlight, cricket at Barambah flourished, and they regularly fielded a senior team in the A. grade and a junior team in the B. grade local competition. In addition to these a number of teams played in matches on the settlement.

In mid-October, The Bulletin was to report on the need for a fast bowler in the Australian team, but suggested that "we have definitely no fast bowler worth considering." It indicated, without giving reasons, that "the most promising in sight is the Queensland abo. Gilbert, and he is never likely to reach the top." There may have been compelling reasons for not selecting Gilbert in an Australian team but these do not do justice to the various suggestions about the

27 The Referee, 28 October 1931: 17.
28 ibid.
29 Kingaroy Guardian and Taabinga Times, 16 October 1931. Barambah, without Gilbert, played the Taabinga Representative team in late December and won the game convincingly on the first innings. Taabinga 71 and 188 to 185 by Barambah. ibid., 31 December, 1931.
31 ibid., 21 October 1931: 24.
merits of his selection made during his career.

Just prior to the annual Country Week Carnival in October, Superintendent Semple wrote a letter that was to display an incredible amount of paternalism with regard to Eddie Gilbert.

**The Deputy Protector of Aboriginais**
**Brisbane**

**Memorandum.**

Regarding Gilbert going to Brisbane for country week and also probably for the 1st. Sheffield Shield. Will any one be in charge of him or will he be at a loose end during the evenings. If so Mr. Bleakley has always been afraid that some of the Speelers might get a hold of him. There is always the chance of someone giving him drink or meeting some of these half caste girls in town.

I trust you do not mind my remarks but I would not like to see Gilbert fail for want of proper attention and advice.

_W. Porteous Semple (Signature)_
Superintendent.

The first match of the Country Week Carnival was between North and South Country. South compiled 243 for the loss of 9 wickets. Higgins gave a fine exhibition for his 76 runs. Suche displayed 'unlimited stamina' and had the best bowling figures for North of 4 for 85. In reply to the South Country total North Country finished the match at 7 wickets down for 166. Sides was the main contributor to the score with an innings of 64, not out. Oxenford bowled very well for South Country and captured 5 wickets for 54. Gilbert was unrewarded from his 13 overs at a cost of 61 runs.

_The Daily Standard (Brisbane)_ was to report that Eddie Gilbert did not get a wicket. "His instructions were to have 'a trial Gallop,' and leave the wicket getting until later in the week. However, he bowled a few very fast ones."\(^{33}\)

---

\(^{32}\) Eddie Gilbert, personal file, _op.cit._, letter no. 06910, 23 October 1931.

\(^{33}\) _The Daily Standard (Brisbane)_ , 21 October 1931: 8.
Ban On Gilbert.

"Too Dangerous to Bowl on Concrete."

Country Association Acts.

From Our Murgon Correspondent.

Figure 3.1. 'Ban on Gilbert' - newspaper headline.

"Thought you said you icerc a good batsman?"
"So I am, but t'at fast bowler—nobody tell HIM!"

Figure 3.2. The Bulletin cartoon on Aborigines in cricket.
Gilbert’s captain for the North against South and Colts against Country matches during the Country Carnival Week was Roy Higgins. Higgins, who had previously played for Queensland, performed reasonably well during the Carnival and was selected in the State team again. He, like Gilbert and most other players, had a continual battle to balance a cricket career against the need to have a job and an income.

"I had to give Shield cricket away when I was 30 because I just couldn’t afford to play it," Higgins said. "I was forced to leave my job as a costing clerk at Brown and Broads to go on the southern tour. To make an interstate tour was, and I guess still is, something you didn’t want to miss."

"It was a big decision to make. I ended up leaving Brisbane and going to work at my father’s timber works at Woodford."

Of the Carnival, and Eddie Gilbert in particular, Higgins was to recall:

They send names down with the best performances and you get picked on that. Eddie was in the team, and it wasn’t a bad side either. He was a little gentleman. You wouldn’t expect him to be like all the others because he was black -- a black young fellow amongst a lot of whites and they do feel uncomfortable. They wouldn’t speak to him, of course, but while I was his captain playing down here I found he would take notice of you and give you his best. I’d say if you ganged up on him he’d be hurt and I think it’s my colour but it’s just imagination of course...If anyone mentions to you about being black you come straight to me and I’ll get him put through the machines with the Q.C.A. He did everything right as far as I was concerned...Batting at the nets he was a lot faster than any bowler we had up here at the time -- he’d let ’em fly in fast. He was a chap in a strange country and it would be like us going up to Barambah -- going in there. I said be kind to him, never mind his colour -- he can’t help that. I found him quite all right -- a good steady chap. He didn’t drink to my knowledge -- which some of them drink and go mad. I tried to be kind to him and if he bowled 2 or 3 ‘no balls’ or something, instead of looking at your mates and talking about it -- he’d see you. I’d say, "Never mind Eddie, just drop your pace a little and just pick a mark on the side of the pitch -- kindness went a long way with him."

Colts won the next match, Country versus Colts, by 149 runs on the first innings. Country batted first and made 171. Batterham "showed an impregnable defence" until he was out for 60,

34 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 25 September 1989: 18.


36 The Brisbane Courier, October 1931: 6.
while Sides "galvanised the large attendance of spectators into life"\(^{37}\) with some bright batting for his 45. Sides and Batterham added 70 runs in 47 minutes. The best bowling form for Colts was shown by Clem, who took 4 for 31 and Broadfoot, who secured 4 for 39. The Colts innings opened sensationally when in the first over Harding was caught out by wicketkeeper Burns off the bowling of Gilbert. The Colts team rallied after this early set-back and went on to score 320 runs. Cook batted chancelessly for his 79. Suche, the Country bowler, kept a fair length and produced the best results of 6 for 91. Gilbert did not trouble the Colts batsmen as much as it was anticipated and eventually was to leave the field sick. He had bowled 15 overs and taken 1 for 44. Higgins, in the absence of Gilbert, went on to bowl and gained 3 wickets at a cost of 16 runs. In the Country second innings they made 213, of which Suche made an outstanding 99 before he was run out on the last ball of the match. Harding, who captured 4 for 66, off 15 overs, was the best of the Colts bowlers.

When Gilbert became ill and was forced to leave the field it was after, "for the first time in his cricketing career in Brisbane, he bowled a wide, and was no-balled twice."\(^{38}\) Gilbert "had a dramatic removal from Windsor Park in an ambulance car"\(^{39}\) and was taken to the Brisbane General Hospital, "where he was found to be suffering from a high temperature together with soreness in the region of the appendix"\(^{40}\) which was eventually diagnosed as having a "mild abdominal discomfort."\(^{41}\) He spent a few days in hospital but recovered quickly enough to be considered for the State team.

\(^{37}\) ibid.

\(^{38}\) ibid.

\(^{39}\) *The Daily Standard*, 2 November 1931: 5.

\(^{40}\) *The Daily Mail* (Brisbane), 29 October 1931: 17.

\(^{41}\) ibid.
Figure 3.3. Eddie Gilbert and Len Allen - film interview.
After his discharge from hospital the Week newspaper carried a picture of Gilbert and Len Allen with the caption:

After lying in Hospital for a few days Eddie Gilbert thought this was one of the brightest days he had seen. Talking with the Chairman of the Country Committee of the Queensland Cricket Association (Mr. L.A. Allen) he was not a bit perturbed by the presence of the "Mike", which was recording the conversation for Australasian Films.42

Because of his illness Eddie Gilbert was unable to play in the City versus Metropolis match. This match was won outright by Metropolis by 219 runs.

The Daily Standard (Brisbane), in summarising the Country Week Carnival, was to report:

Gilbert was a great success last season, but his form last week was very disappointing, and I shall be surprised if he justifies his inclusion. We were told that he appeared to be trying as hard as ever he did.43

About this time a correspondent, 'Broad-Minded,' wrote to The Daily Mail (Brisbane) to mention the "problems that many had in accepting a black player in the state team."44 Although not an issue that was not discussed in the papers it was one that was widely debated by the general public as they continually sought reasons to accept him. Gilbert enjoyed a good deal of popular support but for many white people the opinion that they held about Gilbert was little different to the one that they generally held about all Aborigines. 'Broad-Minded,' an ordinary citizen, was to write:

One has to wonder why these fussy people who object to him did not object to so many of his kinsmen being included in the same great struggle as they themselves - I refer to the Great War.45

42 Week (Brisbane), 4 November 1931: 21.
44 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 30 October 1931: 14.
45 ibid.
Even before the Sheffield Shield season had commenced and the banning of Gilbert in his local competition was out of the papers, another event was to occur. It centred on the comments by a former South African test umpire, Mr. A.G. Laver, to the effect that "it is doubtful whether the South African cricketers will look favourably upon any proposal to play Eddie Gilbert, the Queensland aboriginal fast bowler, against them."\(^{46}\)

Mr. Laver said that sports grounds were provided for natives in South Africa, and they played tennis, cricket, hockey, and football, but there was a distinct line of demarcation. They never appeared in teams with white players.\(^{47}\)

There was a swift response to these comments from the South African team manager, Mr. J.H. Tandy, who indicated that the matter had not been discussed. Both Tandy, and team captain Mr. H.B. Cameron, offered no further comment, but it was reported that "it is understood that the question whether the tourists are to draw the colour line is likely to be discussed by them if the occasion arises when the Queensland team is announced."\(^{48}\)

The Sporting Globe considered that "it very unlikely that any objection will be raised"\(^{49}\) with regard to the playing of Eddie Gilbert. The writer went on and confidently stated that, "In Australia the color [sic] line has never been drawn, and it seems unlikely that a visiting team would seek to vary the custom in a country in which it is touring."\(^{50}\)

The Referee indicated that although Australia stood for a white Australia it would not "stand for the color [sic] ban in sport."\(^{51}\) It considered that the South Africans would not be

\(^{46}\) Sydney Morning Herald, 26 October 1931: 9.

\(^{47}\) ibid.

\(^{48}\) Sydney Morning Herald, 28 October 1931: 9.

\(^{49}\) The Sporting Globe, 28 October 1931: 9.

\(^{50}\) ibid.

\(^{51}\) The Referee, 28 October 1931: 17.
justified "in showing any feeling or even expressing their private opinions over such a matter," although it conceded that "it would be different were the matches played in their country." With regard to Gilbert's response, The Daily Mail (Brisbane) reported that, "With an expansive smile and a twinkle in his eyes," he replied: "That will not cause me to lose any sleep."

The Daily Mail (Brisbane) quoted Mr. Laver, the South African test umpire who had started the controversy:

"My remarks have been misinterpreted. I was discussing cricket in South Africa," said Mr. Laver, "and I referred to the fact that, because of the race problem there, white and coloured cricketers played their games separately. When the case of Gilbert was mentioned to me, I said that in South Africa, no matter how skilful a coloured cricketer might be, he would not figure in any big games with white players. My remarks had no relation to Australian cricket."

No correspondence on the Gilbert question was passed between the Australian Board of Control and the South Africans and a statement by the South African team manager (Mr. Tandy) was to effectively end the whole affair. He said: "We haven’t even considered the matter. It is unfortunate that the question was raised. The team Queensland fields against us is a matter entirely for Queensland’s choice."

The reaction of English cricket was sought and duly reported: "Remarking that cricket knows no class or creed or colour, ‘Plum’ Warner says England has no objection to playing against Gilbert."

The whole South Africa issue with the openly expressed support for Gilbert by various people highlights the contradictions in Australian racist thinking. Gilbert emerged at a time when

52 ibid.
53 ibid.
54 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 27 October 1931: 14.
55 ibid., 28 October 1931: 14.
56 Sydney Morning Herald, 29 October 1931: 10.
57 The Gympie Times, 10 November 1931: 7.
the Australian public strongly supported the idea of a White Australia.  

In Australia, racist behaviour was a direct outgrowth of Western colonial expansion. Racist societies result in people with racist attitudes but racism can also exist without these people due to the likelihood of racist thinking permeating the structural basis of society. White racist attitudes in Australia had changed over time but were still fairly consistent.

Racism, which in essence, is the ideology of race inferiority, depends on the attitudes, behaviours, beliefs, and the socialization [sic] of members in one cultural group, and it is manifested in prejudice, discrimination, stereotyping, ethnocentrism and racialism.  

In the 1930s the official policy of the Queensland government was outlined in the Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, which was passed in 1897. This piece of legislation outlined a policy of containment and exclusion of the Aboriginal population on reserves, effectively segregating them from white mainstream society. On these reserves the Aborigines were expected to adopt and practice white standards.

Australian society, despite its racist nature, ‘worships’ sport. A common assumption is that sport represented one sector of society where black people are given equal opportunities. Compared with other institutions, sport, at the lower levels, at least, has proved to be relatively accessible to Aborigines. Even so, Tatz has said:

The essence of sport is that competition, opportunity and resources be fair and equal for all. A different ethos has applied to black Australians. In our sporting society there has been exclusion from competition, discrimination within it and, at times, gross inequality of chances, choices and facilities.

---

58 Elsewhere in this study an examination is made of Gilbert’s career and the extent to which racist thinking existed in cricket.


Racial discrimination was seen as a normal part of the dealings that Aborigines have with white people, both at an individual and institutional level. A disconcerting aspect was that Aborigines were conditioned into accepting it. Sport has always been subjected to the same racial problems and influences seen in the general community. However, on occasions, there has been some moderation of the existing racial opinions and views under certain circumstances. The career of Eddie Gilbert is an example of this process of ‘accommodation’ in opinions. In the general climate of racial thought of the thirties it is remarkable that Gilbert was allowed to have a first-class cricket career at all.

Early in November 1931, The Brisbane Courier printed a story about an Aborigine, P. Stanley, who was playing cricket at Longreach. Stanley was a fast bowler from Barambah and he "secured six wickets for 10 runs in the first innings" in a match against the Railway team. Unlike Gilbert who was allowed to stay on the settlement Stanley was probably working on a permit in the area, but by late November it was reported that Aboriginal stockmen were being sent to the reserves because there was no work for them in these early days of the Great Depression. For the majority of the Aboriginal population of the state there would now be even fewer opportunities to have contact with white people.

---

61 The Brisbane Courier, 6 November 1931: 6.

62 The Bulletin, 25 November 1931:
In the meantime the first Sheffield Shield match of the 1931-32 season was the Queensland versus New South Wales Sheffield Shield match which took place on the Woolloongabba ground in Brisbane between the 6th to the 10th of November 1931. There was interest in the match, not only for the contest between Bradman and Gilbert, but also because "the fairness of his [Gilbert's] delivery was questioned" by New South Wales players in the previous season. In an expression of the fascination of a racist society many saw the contest between Bradman and Gilbert as an open clash of black and white.

---

63 The Brisbane Courier, 12 November 1931: 5.
Gough won the toss and decided to bat first. Showers delayed the start and, on the rain-affected pitch, Queensland scored only 109 runs. With the exception of Mossop and Hansen the Queensland batsmen failed miserably. Mossop played a ‘plucky’ innings for his 44, while Hansen "showed promise with a well made 20." Gilbert was bowled by McCabe for a ‘duck.’ Chief wicket-taker for New South Wales was ex-Queenslander, Amos, who achieved the figures of 5 wickets for 22, off 13 overs, of which 5 were maidens. He bowled very well, "hardly sending down a loose ball."  

The remarkable feature of the match was the performance of Eddie Gilbert in the opening over of the New South Wales first innings. It was to prove to be one which would long be remembered due to its sensational events.

Thurlow had opened the bowling from the Stanley Street end to Fingleton, who played out the over. When Gilbert came on to bowl at the other end the crowd became ‘expectant.’ It was not far to the boundary behind the stumps and the wicket-keeper, Waterman, and the slips fieldsmen were standing over half-way to the fence.

The Over

Many different accounts have been given of the over that was to be bowled by Gilbert. By combining the common aspects of some of the descriptions that have been made a general account of the over has been outlined. Even so there may be some inaccuracies.

First ball: Gilbert’s first delivery to Bill was short and kicked up dangerously off the green-top wicket at great speed. The red-haired right-handed batsman ducked, and, using his bat for protection top-edged a catch into the safe hands of the wicket-keeper Waterman, "and a shout of appreciation went up that could have been heard blocks away."

---

64 The Age (Melbourne), 7 November 1931: 8.
65 ibid.
66 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 7 November 1931: 14.
With the scoreboard showing New South Wales one for none Bradman came out to bat, receiving a great ovation from the crowd of 4000 which lasted all the way to the wicket.

Roy Higgins played for Queensland in this game and attempted to recall the entry of Bradman after the dismissal of Bill.

The crowd would have been excited -- they would have expected him to make a good score. We didn't take much notice of the crowd. We may have thought to ourselves that he might get a few runs. Don was just coming in -- you couldn't say much, the captain's got his eye on you..."Never mind your talking, keep your mind on the job." 67

Another Queensland player, Des Hansen, recalled that the fieldsmen "expected to be running all over the field" 68 while Bradman was batting:

I was 'windy'[nervous] as a matter of fact when 'Braddy'[Bradman] came in. I was fielding at the top of the gully and I thought if he hits one of Eddie Gilbert's [deliveries] it'll go through me...The wicket had a crown on it...we had been in and out...the wicket was doing a fair bit. 69

**Second ball:** The need or desire to prove oneself is a strong motivating force and it was a very determined Eddie Gilbert who bowled a fast ball on a good length. This was blocked by Bradman.

**Third ball:** The second ball that Bradman faced once again left the pitch at terrific pace and in trying to get under the rising ball Bradman lost his balance and fell backwards. It had apparently clipped the peak of his cap. Some reports were to incorrectly suggest that the ball sent the cap almost back to the wicket-keeper. Queensland player, Des Hansen, remembered how Bradman "was sittin' down on his backside and we [fieldsmen] thought to ourselves 'Braddy' mightn't be there very long now and started to smile." 70

---


69 ibid.

70 ibid.
Figure 3.5. Bill caught by Waterman off Gilbert.

Figure 3.6. Bradman stumbled and fell after Gilbert's second delivery.
Fourth ball: Looking a little uncomfortable Bradman faced up to the next ball. Gilbert was bowling with tremendous pace. This ball "swept over Don's head to Wicket-keeper Waterman."^71

Fifth ball: At the end of his career Bradman was to suggest that this particular ball was the fastest he would ever face. This ball left the pitch at a lightning speed and Bradman in 'attempting' a hook shot lost his balance and the ball "went perilously up just short of Suche, who was fielding at third slip."^72 Gilbert "snorted with disgust, and the crowd groaned."^73 In attempting to execute this shot the bat was knocked completely out of his hands. This was the only time this was ever to happen to Bradman in his career. Of the shot one report was to suggest that "It is doubtful if Bradman meant that shot because he ducked right to the ground in attempting to avoid the ball."^74

Sixth ball: "To the consternation of the spectators the mightiest batsman in the world became bewildered at the pace of the Queensland bowler."^75 Bradman tried to hook this ball but mis-judged the pace of the ball and snicked an off-side catch to Waterman's gloves - D. Bradman, caught W. Waterman, bowled E. Gilbert. The crowd was taken by surprise by the dismissal but roared their approval as New South Wales were suddenly 2 for none. Bradman walked off the ground to some polite applause, "not looking disappointed if he felt it."^76

^71 The Sporting Globe, 11 November 1931: 8.
^72 The Brisbane Courier, 9 November 1931: 5.
^73 The Daily Telegraph (Melbourne), 7 November 1931: 3.
^74 The Brisbane Courier, 7 November 1931: 6.
^75 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 7 November 1931: 14.
^76 The Sporting Globe, 11 November 1931: 8.
All around the Brisbane Cricket Ground "the amazing start sent the crowd delirious with delight." They rose en masse and cheered themselves hoarse. Gilbert found it necessary to leave the ground to have one of his boots attended to. He was cheered from the crease to the pavilion, and from the pavilion to the crease, and during the brief interim the buzz of the animated conversation that went on was deafening. It was just the tonic they needed after the Queenslander's [batting] failure.

The wicket of Bradman was to be "the greatest achievement of Gilbert's career." Reports of the time suggested that during the over Bradman had seemed to lose track of the ball once it hit the pitch and "appeared more concerned with protecting himself than his wicket." It may be considered that this was the outcome of a 'weak' showing by Bradman but the speed that Gilbert was bowling was astonishing.

Of Bradman's departure Roy Higgins has recalled:

"It became a bit of a joke over the years that the only time Bradman smiled on the field was when Gilbert got him out for a duck - he was that pleased to get out of the place."

According to former Barambah inmate, Vince Bunda, the match was being keenly followed by the inmates at the Barambah settlement.

At the time there would be about three radios on the mission and Crawford...had a crystal set and every time the State played and Gilbert played he'd bring the radio out on the verandah and everybody on the mission was out there and sit on his front lawn to listen to it.

---

77 The Brisbane Courier, 7 November 1931: 8.

78 ibid.


80 ibid.


Irregardless of tribal affiliation the inmates of the settlement were proud of Eddie Gilbert. To them he was "a greater cricketer than Bradman." After the dismissal of Bradman the Aboriginal inmates of Barambah cheered wildly in celebration. Shortly after the game the inmates were given an extra plug of tobacco with their rations as a ‘reward’ for Gilbert’s achievement.

After considering the event and its aftermath it is easy to agree with Thom Blake, who, in a doctoral study on Barambah (Cherbourg), has asserted:

Probably no single ball bowled in the history of cricket has had as important sociocultural ramifications. Other incidents have been controversial and bowling performances engendered debate and argument, but this single delivery was to be immortalised and imbued with significance in a manner quite different from other momentous occasions in the history of cricket. From the perspective of the Barambah inmates, the incident was not remembered and relished simply as a remarkable cricketing feat. The occasion demonstrated that black could triumph over white. Living on the settlement, inmates were constantly reminded of their inferior status as blacks. They were ‘under the Act’ because they could not manage their own lives. But after thirty years of daily humiliation, Gilbert showed convincingly that blacks were not necessarily inferior to whites. Indeed, it was a black man who succeeded where few others did.

In the midst of the despondency and despair generated by the settlement regimen, Bradman’s dismissal gave inmates a sense of hope and pride. Gilbert’s exploits were concrete evidence that they were just as good as, if not better, than whitefellas. As inmates struggled to resist being labelled and stereotyped and the sense of inferiority engendered by the settlement regime, Gilbert’s achievements reassured them that their inferior status was undeserved. It countered the usual stereotypes of Aboriginals as lazy, useless primitives.

Harold Francis was a spectator at the match and has recalled:

I saw Gilbert. I was at the match when he got Bradman. He was too bloody fast for Bradman – Bradman was afraid of it. I saw it with my own eyes and I was sitting near a good cricketer – he and I used to open for Toowoomba here, Les Nash. He was a teacher too. Les said, "What do you think of that Harold?" I said, "He was afraid of the ball, afraid of the man, afraid of being hit and that got him." And he said, "That’s my opinion too."

---

83 The Referee, 10 December 1930: 19.


Don Bradman left the field after facing bowling that was the fastest he would ever experience in his career. In personal correspondence Sir Donald Bradman was to suggest: "The few balls that he sent down to me in that 'fateful over' were the fastest ever bowled to me and I'm afraid my attempted hook shot was far too late." When 'someone' sympathised with Bradman when he returned to the pavilion he smilingly said: "It was the luckiest duck I ever made."

Kippax was next man in and he may well have been more nervous than usual as he made his way to the batting crease.

**Seventh ball:** Kippax allowed Gilbert's seventh ball to fly over his head.

**Eighth ball:** Kippax played and blocked this ball. It was the end of a sensational maiden over for the state bowler and he had taken 2 wickets.

---

**Figure 3.7. Waterman, the wicketkeeper, catches Bradman off Gilbert.**

---

86 Don Bradman, personal correspondence, 2 February 1990.

87 *Sunday Sun* (Brisbane), 8 August 1982: 8. Also reported in various other papers.
Gilbert obviously realised that "he was having the big test of his career, particularly when bowling to Bradman," and "he put all he had into that one sensational over." At the end of play for the day Queensland player, Des Hansen, recalled:

> When we went off the field 'Braddy' [Bradman] was waiting to see Eddie and said to Eddie: "I'll see you down south in a few weeks." He had a half-grin on his face. I think he got the greatest fright of his life that day.

The excitement about the dismissal of Bradman was to last long after the match and one youngster at the game, Kevin Kelly, was to later recall listening avidly to a "discussion at Coorparoo Junction between my father and Waterman [the wicket-keeper] about the dismissal." The dismissal of Bradman had given Waterman, in his first match for Queensland, a most notable 'scalp' with which to remember his debut.

After being 2 for 0, due to the sensational opening over by Eddie Gilbert, and 3 wickets down for 31, the New South Wales batsmen rallied to score 432 runs. Stan McCabe "rose amongst the wreckage" and scored 229 runs, not out, in an innings "ranked as one of the finest played on the Brisbane Cricket Ground." Early in his innings "he gave a ridiculously easy chance to Sides off the bowling of Suche." His innings helped to lift his team from "the depths of impending defeat to the heights of probable victory." When McCabe was in full flight the crowd began calling for Gilbert to go on, but by that time "even Eddie's sky rockets...

---

88 The Referee, 11 November 1931: 24.
89 ibid.
90 Des Hansen, personal interview, op.cit.
91 Kevin Kelly, in The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 6 March 1976: Magazine.
93 Truth (Brisbane), 8 November 1931: 5.
95 Truth (Brisbane), 8 November 1931: 5.
were squibs to McCabe, and just to show his disdain he sent some of them for fours.\textsuperscript{96} Jack Fingleton was batting with McCabe and later wrote that Gilbert’s "speed at the Wooolloongabba cricket ground one murky Brisbane evening was as fast as anything I have seen."\textsuperscript{97} In his book, Fingleton on Cricket, and using a little ‘licence,’ he wrote:

I was down the other end once during that hectic late-afternoon, with Stan McCabe taking strike, and I remarked to Gilbert: ‘You are pretty fast today, Eddie?’ Gilbert, a slim little man of possibly no more than eight stone, looked shyly at me and said: ‘I bowl a plurry lot faster if they let me take my boots off.’\textsuperscript{98}

Fingleton, "whose chin and shoulders went forwards in grim determination to every ball tossed up,"\textsuperscript{99} scored an invaluable 93. Oldfield ‘chipped in’ with a useful 46 while Kippax, the captain, had compiled 16 runs before he was forced to retire owing to a head injury received when facing Thurlow. The injury required 6 stitches and Thurlow "was so slow by comparison [to Gilbert]," said Bradman, "that Kippax had completed his stroke before the ball arrived."\textsuperscript{100}

Gilbert, the new ‘star’ and ‘idol’ of the Queensland crowd, and Thurlow, were able to make early use of a fast pitch, which later became lifeless and gave the bowlers "a trying time, which was not helped by patchy fielding."\textsuperscript{101} After early figures of 3 for 12 Gilbert ended up taking 4 wickets for 74, but was "rather unlucky at times."\textsuperscript{102} The reliable Oxenham took 2 for 79, and Hurwood returned 2 for 95.

As sensational as the New South Wales innings began, so did it end. McCabe drove

\textsuperscript{96} \underline{Truth} (Brisbane), 8 November 1931: 5.
\textsuperscript{99} ibid.
\textsuperscript{100} Edward Wybergh Docker. Bradman and the Bodyline Series. Brighton, Angus and Robertson, 1978: 70.
\textsuperscript{101} The Brisbane Courier, 9 November 1931: 6.
\textsuperscript{102} ibid.
one of Gilbert’s deliveries down the pitch towards Gilbert, who fielded it. Hunt had backed up too far and Eddie Gilbert "made a brilliant finish by electrically throwing out Hunt while almost lying prostrate on the ground."\textsuperscript{103}

Queensland were to fail yet again in the second innings and put together the meagre total of only 85 runs. Waterman top-scored with 20, and Suche made 12. Main wicket-takers for New South Wales were Hunt, with the fine figures of 4 for 25, while Campbell took 3 for 13. New South Wales ended up winning the match by an innings and 238 runs, and it was a disappointing start to the season for Queensland. Two main areas of weakness were identified, "and they were that our batting strength was much below expectations, while the fielding left much to be desired."\textsuperscript{104}

It is interesting to note that, following the dismissal of Bradman by Gilbert for a ‘duck,’ it was reported that, "in his next seven first-class matches Bradman made seven hundreds."\textsuperscript{105} This, in fact, was not the case.

It was the dismissal of Bradman, universally recognised as the greatest batsman to play the game of cricket, for only his third first-class ‘no score,’ that was to mark Gilbert as one of only fifteen bowlers who could later claim to have "got Bradman for a duck."\textsuperscript{106} In an event lasting little longer than the blink of an eye Eddie Gilbert, who was already one of the "most magnetic characters of Queensland cricket folklore, was immortalised the day he trumped Bradman."\textsuperscript{107}

The short story, ‘That Barambah Mob,’ a mixture of fact and fiction by David Forrest

\textsuperscript{103} Truth (Brisbane), 8 November 1931: 5.

\textsuperscript{104} The Brisbane Courier, 9 November 1931: 5.


\textsuperscript{107} ibid.
from which passages have been quoted elsewhere, was to point out some of the different views about Bradman's dismissal that became part of cricket folklore. Many people who attended the game were to later claim that Bradman was bowled, usually with the "stumps flying all over the ground at Woolloongabba,"¹⁰⁸ but of course "the stumps were erect when the exultant 'Owzat?' heralded his exit."¹⁰⁹

"Later on," he said, "we used t'go down t'Brisbane t'see Gilbert slippin' into Bradman." We straightened up with a bit of a jerk and poised our pencil. We wondered, with baited breath, whether Mr. Stulpnagel had actually seen Gilbert bowl the ball that turned Shield cricket upside down. He had indeed.

"Bowled him for a duck!" boomed Mr. Stulpnagel. "They say it wasn't fair and square, and that's in the book for everybody to see."

We scribbled furiously.

What sort of a ball was it that got him?

"It was a full toss. Bradman played it like a school kid. Fair on his off stump. The 'keeper took it inside the fence. Just as well they had a fence."

We finished writing.

We said, "A bloke in Brisbane said it swerved as it came in."

"Some blokes'll tell you anything," said Mr. Stulpnagel. "Did he see that ball bowled?"

"He said he did."

"Yeah," said Mr. Stulpnagel.

We didn’t tell him about the man in Ipswich who said it was an outswinger; or about the fella in Toogoolawah who said it was a yorker, right up in the block-hole.

"Look," said Mr. Stulpnagel, "Gilbert never swung the ball. Straight up and down."

We scribbled very fast.

"He didn’t have to swing the ball," said Mr. Stulpnagel.

"He was the fastest bowler the world’s ever seen. And when you’re that fast, why muck about with the fancy stuff?"

..."He snicked it," said the policeman. "It was a shooter."

We didn’t tell him about the fella in Brisbane who said it swung in, or about the man in Ipswich who said it swung out.

We didn’t mention the bloke in Toogoolawah who said it was a yorker, right up in the block-hole; or Mr. Stulpnagel, who said it was a full toss.¹¹⁰


¹⁰⁹ ibid.

The dismissal of Bradman by Gilbert was a great achievement but it was soon to become a controversial issue. In the story Mr. Stilpnagel outlined the situation in his own way:

"He made an ape of Bradman, and he was black, and he was born in Queensland, and they didn't like the look o' that whippy wrist of his. They reckoned he wasn't bowlin'".\(^{111}\)

The match should have reinforced the view that Eddie was the fastest and most dangerous bowler in Australia, but it led to a fresh spate of accusations against his method of delivery. During the match Gilbert had been staying, as usual, with Mr. Allen at Sandgate. The Daily Mail (Brisbane) was to quote Allen:

"Gilbert," he said, "during the recent game - Saturday, Monday, and Tuesday - heard of the whisperings of New South Wales players that his bowling was unfair, and the thought of this caused Eddie great mental concern."\(^{112}\)

The issue came into the open when, just before his departure, the manager of the New South Wales team, Mr. A.L. Rose, in a statement, was to claim, but "not exactly in these words,"\(^{113}\) that 'EDDIE GILBERT THROWS.'

Eddie Gilbert throws, not with a spear or a boomerang, but with an ordinary cricket ball. He hurled one at Fingleton, Bill, Kippax, and Bradman last Friday afternoon at the 'Gabba.'\(^{114}\)

Mr. Rose was to suggest that it 'hurt' him to say these things because "his team had been treated very kindly while in Brisbane."\(^{115}\) After arriving in Sydney, Rose signalled his intention to make an official report to the New South Wales Cricket Association regarding his contention that Gilbert threw the ball.

\(^{111}\) ibid.

\(^{112}\) The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 12 November 1931: 12.

\(^{113}\) The Daily Standard (Brisbane), 11 November 1931: 5.

\(^{114}\) ibid.

\(^{115}\) ibid.
Mr. Rose declared that he had no desire to withdraw any statement he had made in Brisbane. "I would say that for the first three overs Gilbert threw the ball," he stated, "and after that he was not nearly so dangerous; indeed, on Saturday our batsmen found little trouble in playing him. He gave Don Bradman no chance at all."

I don't care what the moving pictures are supposed to have revealed," wound up Mr. Rose, "we are positive that he throws the ball and I say again that it is a blot on the game."^116

Although Mr. Rose was not the first to voice his opinion about Gilbert's delivery his accusations were to make 'Fairgo,' of The Daily Standard (Brisbane), more than a little annoyed.

In making this statement, in which he said that there is no doubt in his mind that Gilbert throws, and actually did throw every ball at Bradman, Mr Rose explained that he did it in the interests of cricket, which was a clean game and should be played according to the rules.

Eddie Gilbert's delivery was O.K.'ed by six Southern umpires during the tour of the last Queensland team, and has not been questioned by at least half a dozen more in this State. Mr. Rose is sure that Gilbert throws, despite what umpires think, and four New South Wales players agree with him. Only four, the four who had the ball hurled at them, I suppose. Fairfax was also bowled by Gilbert, but he isn't mentioned. Perhaps he is satisfied.

**GREATEST OFFENCE.**

Gilbert's greatest offence seems to have been his dismissal of Bradman and Bill for none. Had the tail-enders been the victims, the question may not have been raised.

I discussed Gilbert with a couple of New South Wales players on Monday afternoon, and when I expressed the opinion that his over, or portion of one, to Bradman was the fastest I had seen, one of the players remarked. "How can he bowl faster than Larwood with a run of a few yards. He must throw."^117

'Red and Black,' of The Referee, had made up his own mind, and, in comments made after the match, reported that "good judges of Queensland cricket had no doubt that the aboriginal's opening over on Friday was a succession of throws."^118 He went on to state:

---

^116 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 13 November 1931: 16.

^117 The Daily Standard (Brisbane), 11 November 1931: 5.

^118 The Referee, 11 November 1931: 24.
The "boy" from the Barambah Settlement simply made an "Aunt Sally" of Wendell Bill and Don Bradman in that sensational opening over.

He just pelted them down like greased lightning, straight at the batsmen, and it was as much as they could do to keep out of harm's way. If Gilbert bowled fairly throughout he is one of the cricket finds of the century.

**BRADMAN BEWILDERED**

It was a most amazing scene when Bradman, the world’s best batsman, was compelled to strike an undignified attitude before the dusky youth’s lightning attack.

Bradman stood there bewildered. Afterwards he confided to his friends that he was "flabbergasted" by the pace. It was the fastest bowling he had ever faced—yards faster than Larwood at his top.

It was Bradman’s first experience of Gilbert. He had not seen him in action before Bill was caught off the first ball of the match.

Bradman himself was too good a sportsman to complain after his dismissal. He smiled as he returned to the pavilion as if he realised the joke was on him, and he refused to comment on Gilbert’s deliveries. It was mostly from his team mates that the criticism of the aboriginal’s bowling arose.119

![Figure 3.8. Gilbert’s bowling action in various stages.](image)

The ‘relationship’ between Gilbert and Bradman is worth exploring especially since both enjoyed a high level of popularity in Queensland.120 Don Bradman, according to Robert Crawford, the Barambah schoolteacher and mentor of Eddie Gilbert, had been ‘unkind’ to Gilbert by insisting that Gilbert not play against the Kippax team at Gympie earlier in the year. Gilbert would have

119 ibid.

120 The relationship between Gilbert and Bradman is explored at various times throughout this study.
been made aware of any such comments and this may have hardened his resolve to do well against Bradman.\footnote{121}

Bradman was twenty-three years old at the time of his first meeting with Gilbert but he was already recognised as being a cricketing genius and in a class of his own. He was widely acclaimed for his performances. In fourteen test matches he had averaged 94 runs per innings and held the World Test record of 334 runs.

Bradman’s dismissal was a unique victory for Gilbert and he was supposedly "content, the game finished, to retire to Barambah and continue with his work, his home, and his cricket."\footnote{122} This was not to be and Gilbert was thrust into some unenviable and distasteful publicity, partly courtesy of Bradman.

Soon after the game Bradman was involved in making a talkie ‘short’ for an Australian news gazette. It was to be a controversial piece of film and under the heading, ‘Bowler Is Hurt By Don Bradman’s Talkie "Crack,"’ Smith’s Weekly was to state:

The most talked of figure in Australian cricket to-day is Eddie Gilbert, Queensland aboriginal bowler, who, strangely enough, is a lonely player in the midst of a sport that is a hubbub of conviviality.

Literally he has been stunned by the publicity—most of it unkind—that has burst on him. And he regards as one of the most unkind cuts of all the talkie "short" in which Don Bradman and Arthur Mailey whisper to each other and laugh as Gilbert’s name is mentioned.

"Smith’s" interviewed this lonely colored [sic] boy and found him a quiet, unassuming young man who can’t make out why there is such a lot of fuss about him, why there should be so much discussion about his color [sic]—something he had nothing to do with—and the controversy that rages over his bowling, whether he throws or not.

\footnote{121} Before the Brisbane match it was reported that a rumour had circulated privately that Bradman had said, "If he plays, I don’t." This was probably a ‘modification’ of the comments attributed to Bradman before the Kippax versus Gympie match and which has already been outlined. (Various informants have made similar statements but there is no direct evidence available. For example, Robert Crawford interview, tape in possession of Harry Michel, Murgon.)

\footnote{122} Queensland Arrow, 27 January 1933: 2.
Does he throw? This is a matter for argument. Eddie Gilbert tells "Smith's" he does not throw at all—that he bowls in a perfectly legitimate manner and that he developed speed through long practice and his own pacy way of bringing his arm round powerfully at the end of his short run.

Eddie Gilbert, nevertheless, persists that he only does his best when he is picked for a team. And he is deeply hurt by some of the controversy that has gone on round him.

There was a hint that the South Africans wouldn't like to play against them [Queensland]. The color [sic] line was supposed to be some sort of sacred bar. And then came Don Bradman's talkie crack at him. The black boy hasn't had the heart to go and see it. He has had it very well described and plainly, doesn't think it is very funny.

In this talkie Mailey draws a sketch of Bradman and by easy stages the conversation veers round to the "duck" that Don achieved when he met Gilbert.

"And what do you really think of Eddie Gilbert?" asks Mailey. Looking round him, as if to see no one can overhear, Bradman whispers something in Mailey's ear and they both break into a hearty chuckle and the picture fades out.

Len Allen, Gilbert's friend, thinks it is cruelly pointed. Gilbert himself is very much pained at the mention of it.

"What do you think of Don Bradman?" the black bowler was asked.

"Oh. Bradman," he said. "He's all right." Puzzled about the fuss, unnerved by the continual stream of comment, Gilbert has retired into his shell for he is a very shy creature. One of these days everyone will leave him alone and then he'll get on to the field and get on with his cricket unhampere
d.

The general opinion among true sportsmen is that whatever his color, [sic] if he can play better than anyone else he is entitled to his game, whether it be in State, interstate, or international cricket. 123

The conversation with Mailey is interesting, bearing in mind Mailey's own reported views that,

"While Gilbert bowled very fast last Friday,...it was the fire in the wicket that assisted him and

made him so dangerous. He does not throw."\textsuperscript{124}

At the time none of the major papers saw fit to mention the 'talkie' incident and the sarcastic nature of Bradman's comment but the \textit{Queensland Arrow}, over twelve months later, was to reflect:

Feelings were mixed. There was, of course, loyalty to Bradman as Australia's most prolific run-getter. Then there was plenty of sympathy for Eddie. There was no question, the boy was hurt. He had played a clean game and there was no room for any slur, even on the question of color [sic]. And at that, Gilbert is as much an Australian as any cricketer.\textsuperscript{125}

Some time after the match Bradman was to write: "From the pavilion his bowling looked fair to me, but when batting against him it appeared to me that if he did not actually throw the ball he certainly jerked it."\textsuperscript{126} The doubts about Gilbert's action seem to be further supported by some comments attributed to Bradman:

When an outsider innocently asked the players later what did they think of Gilbert's bowling, Don answered "Does he?"

"I unhesitatingly class this short burst as faster than anything seen from Larwood or anyone else" he said.

"The players all thought his action decidedly suspect."\textsuperscript{127}

Personal correspondence with Sir Donald Bradman reinforces some of the comments already made by him and gives some insight into his contact with Gilbert.

I only met him for fleeting moments on the field of play. In that context he was very quiet - almost shy - but I never met him socially.

I am unaware that he ever suffered from racial discrimination and to the best of my knowledge he was always treated with respect and as an equal.

\textsuperscript{124} The Brisbane Courier, 12 November 1931: 5.
\textsuperscript{125} Queensland Arrow, 27 January 1933: 2.
\textsuperscript{126} Michael Page, \textit{Bradman, the biography}. Sydney: Sun Books, 1988: 99.
\textsuperscript{127} Ray Robinson, 'Tribute to Eddie Gilbert.' \textit{Cricketer} (Australia), February 1978: 9. Comments also drawn from \textit{Farewell to Cricket; Bradman, the biography}, and other sources.
On the question of his bowling action you must remember that every delivery is not necessarily the same.

To generate such immense speed with a conventional bowling action would have been remarkable and I think we must accept the verdict of the umpires that he was not always within the accepted rules.128

It is a little peculiar that Bradman had no social contact with Gilbert although "it wasn't usual for the two teams to mix after the game."129 The tensions between the two teams over the fairness of Gilbert's bowling may have caused the teams to keep apart more than normal. Still it is also hard to imagine that some of the newspapers were not keen on securing a picture of Gilbert and Bradman together.

From his behaviour and comments Bradman was apparently unhappy about the depiction of an Aborigine conquering him and believed that "There is no doubt the Queensland umpires were very lenient in interpreting Gilbert's bowling action."130 By certain actions and in expressing his opinions the way he did he probably went further than most cricketers in applying some of the predominant racial attitudes of the population to the involvement of Gilbert in sport. Sport was considered 'out of bounds' for many of the racial slurs that existed in society. The West Indies and other countries with predominantly black populations played the game in harmony against countries such as Australia. Gilbert attracted considerable sympathy and support, especially in Queensland.

To be fair to Bradman none of the evidence points clearly to open antagonism or racial prejudice towards Gilbert but he was to give the distinct impression that he neither liked facing


Gilbert nor believed that he was a totally fair bowler. In these matters Bradman was not alone in his opinion.

An investigation of the issue of Gilbert's bowling gives an opportunity to gain an insight into the players and the personalities of the era as well as the various aspects and influences in the game of cricket. One particular influence is the role of the sports-writers of the time. In undertaking such a review a 'danger' exists in exposing some of the inconsistencies in the unwritten conventions that are supposedly the basis of the game. The whole 'gentlemanly' nature of the game may be open to some question.

Outline of the controversy

The umpires of the game were later interviewed about the game.

When the match umpires were consulted, Mr J. Bartlett said that he considered Gilbert's deliveries quite fair.

His colleague, Mr J.A. Scott, was not as sure. "I have been doubtful sometimes," he remarked, "but as the moving pictures and the leading Southern umpires O.K.'ed his bowling, I gave him the benefit of the doubt."\(^{131}\)

A short time later Scott was to make a 'startling' admission about the whole incident:

"On many occasions, I have had grave doubts about the fairness of Gilbert's bowling!" said Mr. J.A. Scott who umpired...in the recent match...

"I could not say whether he was guilty of throwing in his first over to Bradman," he added. "I was the umpire at the bowling end when Gilbert was bowling on Friday, but after watching his approach to the wicket, I concentrated on his feet. In my opinion...it is almost impossible for an umpire at the bowling end to watch both the feet and delivery of a fast bowler at the same time."...

Mr. Scott referred to Hele, the test match umpire, passing Gilbert, but stated the South Australian umpire had requested Frank Gough, the Queensland captain, to place Gilbert's arm in splints. This Gough had refused to do, added Mr. Scott.\(^{132}\)

\(^{131}\) The Sporting Globe, 18 November 1931: 9.

\(^{132}\) The Referee, 18 November 1931: 15.
Mr. W.H. Carvosso, president of the Queensland Cricket Umpires’ Association, did not agree with Scott that it was impossible for an umpire to watch both the bowling arm and the feet of the bowler, although he conceded that "it is impossible to concentrate on both at the same moment." He saw a need to gain assistance from the square-leg umpire if there were any doubts as to the fairness of any delivery. He made clear his own opinion when he said:

"Personally I have not the slightest doubt that Gilbert’s delivery is a fair one. I have watched him closely and come to the conclusion that the man’s attitude did not put him in a throwing position."

Mr. H. Armstrong, secretary of the New South Wales Umpires’ Association, was to suggest that Gilbert had been closely watched when he visited Sydney in 1930. The Sun (Sydney) reported his comments:

"My colleague and I had heard the rumours," he said, "and we watched Gilbert very closely. In our opinion his delivery was perfectly fair. His arm came straight over without any semblance of a jerk." "Of course I do not know how he bowled in Brisbane. I refer only to my own experience."

Moving pictures reveal nothing. The man under suspicion naturally is careful when the camera is focussed. In the meantime, we can only wait until Gilbert comes to Sydney.

Another opinion in the debate was provided by Mr. J. Orr, one of the most experienced umpires in the State. This gentleman officiated in the New South Wales against Queensland match in 1930, when Gilbert was a player and considered that his deliveries were absolutely fair. "He had not the slightest doubt on that point. But he would not pass an opinion on him this year because he wasn’t officiating on the field."

---

133 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 13 November 1931: 16.

134 ibid.

135 The Sun (Sydney), 14 November, 1931: 10.

136 The Referee, 18 November 1931: 1. Orr’s comment is particularly interesting, because he had ‘called’ both Henry and Marsh, two other aboriginal bowlers, when they were playing.
Mr. Wettenhall, who was one of the umpires in the match in Melbourne in 1930, also entered into the discussions by asserting that, "Unless Gilbert had altered his style since he played for Queensland in Melbourne last season, no objection could be taken to his bowling on the ground that he throws."  

He went on to say:

"Gilbert has a peculiar flick of the wrist at the time the ball is about to leave his hand. Unless watched closely this may give the impression of a throw," he said.

Gilbert bowled among others an extra fast ball. The wrist action was then more noticeable. In his opinion there was no breach of the law in his bowling. From outside the fence it would be easy to get the idea that Gilbert threw the ball occasionally, but the umpire was always in the best position to judge.

'Out,' writing in *The Daily Mail* (Brisbane), was not impressed by the doubts cast on the match umpires inherent in Rose’s comments. He said:

Two umpires in charge of the recent Sheffield Shield match, by failing to call Gilbert, have tacitly ruled that his delivery in the match was, in their opinion, fair. Time was when in cricket circles the opinion of the umpire was final. Now the criticism by Mr. Rose...is actually a very caustic criticism of the fitness or otherwise of the umpires for the position to which they have been appointed by the duly constituted authority for the control of the game.

---

137 *The Daily Mail* (Brisbane), 12 November 1931: 14; *The Sun* (Melbourne), 11 November 1931: 7.

138 ibid.

139 ibid., 13 November 1931: 16.
Figure 3.9. Eddie Gilbert - a bowler under 'attack.'
As for Eddie Gilbert, *The Brisbane Courier* carried a story under the headline: ‘GILBERT’S VIEWS.’

MURGON, November 11.

Surprise and annoyance is expressed in local cricket circles at the statement made by the manager of the New South Wales team concerning Gilbert’s delivery. Gilbert returned to Barambah to-day, and when interviewed this afternoon said that it was nothing to do with him. He was quite prepared to abide by the Queensland selectors, and was not worrying about what the New South Wales manager thought. However, he did consider the statement was a decided slur on the Queensland umpires. Gilbert was naturally given a great reception when he returned to the settlement, but he appears to be tired by so much press publicity, first over the South African discussion, and then the inter-State game, and he says now that he would rather keep right out of the present discussion.140

*The Sporting Globe* also outlined Eddie’s opinion:

"It is ridiculous," said Eddie Gilbert, soon after reaching his mission station at Barambah after his return from the match. "I am quite satisfied that I did not throw the ball." He added that he had no intention of changing his style until it was proved that he threw.141

There was some general agreement that the state of the pitch on the particular day of Gilbert’s great achievement had helped make him difficult to master. *The Brisbane Courier* believed that the wicket became dangerous due to "rolling after the wicket sweating through the tarpaulin covers."142

Mr. Crawford, of Barambah, knew more about Eddie Gilbert the person and cricketer, than just about anyone else. He was to say:

"We are all sure," said Mr. Crawford, "that the whole statement borders upon the ridiculous." Mr. Rose had his argument by pointing to Gilbert’s lifeless bowling on Saturday, but Gilbert himself, as soon as he arrived back at Barambah yesterday morning, had said that the wicket on Saturday was absolutely dead. That was the obvious explanation of the lifelessness of the bowling, of which Mr. Rose spoke...

---

140 *The Brisbane Courier*, 12 November 1931: 5.


"We are quite sure the selectors will take his bowling for what is worth," added Mr. Crawford. If Mr. Rose had seen Gilbert in action as often as cricketers in the district had he would alter his opinion. It was that little jump of his, and the straightening up of his body as he delivered the ball, which was hoodwinking Mr. Rose and the four New South Wales players who agreed with him.  

Mr. Len Allen, Secretary of the Country Cricket Committee, who had Gilbert stay at his house when he was in Brisbane, very strongly resented the comments of Mr. Rose.  

"In the first place," said Mr. Allen, "the New South Wales manager, Mr. Rose, in taking upon himself the role of critic, has, to my way of thinking, overstepped the bounds of his position. He was sent here as manager, and in that capacity has no right to criticise Gilbert."  

Just whether Mr. Rose had the cricket ability to pose as a critic of throwing was questionable, he added, for outside of administrative positions he had done nothing to warrant his sitting in judgement on Gilbert's bowling. He was certainly not an expert.  

He was clearly upset when, in another comment, he said: "Gilbert is the last man in the world to do anything contrary to the traditions of the game, which he loves and respects just as does Mr. Rose."  

As the controversy continued, The Daily Standard (Brisbane) suggested that "a great fuss has been made of very little" and that "many useless things are still being said." The issue, played out as it was in the press, was still far from being decided, however.  

'Observer,' in The Daily Mail (Brisbane), wrote:  

I think the extra pace that Gilbert had on when bowling against Wendell Bill and Bradman was due to a determined effort on Gilbert's part to bowl as he had never bowled before. In addition to that, the wicket evidently helped him more on the first day than the second day.

---

143 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 13 November 1931: 16.  
144 ibid.  
145 The Gympie Times, 14 November 1931: 3.  
146 The Daily Standard (Brisbane), 12 November 1931: 5.  
147 ibid.
It would be interesting to have Mr. Rose's version of an actual throw. No one can throw a cricket ball that will rise up in exactly the same way as a fast ball bowled will rise. And even if that were possible it would be more difficult for a man of short stature than a tall man. Any cricketer who can bowl a fast ball can test this by alternately throwing and bowling when at practice...

Mr. Rose says that Gilbert bowled with less sting on the second day but his action was the same as the first day, except that his arm did not come over and down so quickly, and the wicket may have been less favourable to him.

For a short man, Gilbert has unusually long arms and also has long fingers. Looking at his arm action from three different positions, I feel quite certain that his elbow was almost straight, and that his great pace was wholly due to a splendid wrist action, his left arm swinging back simultaneously as he lets the ball fly forward. His short run forces him to hurl himself forward, but with perfect balance. His shortness also gives the ball a lower trajectory, which certainly gives a little more pace.

His short run and quick delivery beat many star batsmen; Bill, Bradman, and Fairfax were quickly out. The four New South Wales players who stated that Gilbert throws no doubt know well that he is likely to bowl them out.148

The war of words about the legitimacy of Gilbert's action saw a debate in which neither point of view was willing to accept defeat. In analysing the cause of the controversy, Gilbert's bowling action, 'Mid-Off,' of the Sports Referee (Brisbane), was to suggest:

It is conceded that no fault can be found with his delivery from the point when his arm is swung backward, and the forward swing is about to commence, and it is at this stage that a diversity of opinion is formed. Gilbert, with his arm slightly bent, seems to shoot forward with the action of a piston rod. The great pace he obtains off the pitch is attributed to his powerful wrist action, as the ball receives a flick as it leaves his hand.149

---

148 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 14 November 1931: 16.

149 Sports Referee (Brisbane), 14 November 1931: 11.
The Sporting Globe added to the comments on Gilbert's action by publishing a letter from 'E.L.J.' from Melbourne.

A recently published photograph of Gilbert, the Queensland fast bowler, in the act of delivering the ball appears to give Gilbert the benefit of the doubt as to "throwing" the ball, and final judgement must be left to the umpires when the bowler is in action.

However, the photograph plainly shows that Gilbert should be no-balled for delivering the ball in front of the bowling crease, as his back foot is at least six inches off the ground when the ball had not left the bowler's hand.

This is a fault fairly common among express bowlers. Some drag over the crease and others lift the back foot before delivering the ball.¹⁵⁰

An article in The Brisbane Courier reminded people that "when Gilbert made his debut in first class cricket last season the fairness of his delivery was questioned."¹⁵¹

One un-named New South Wales player stated: "If Gilbert's bowled fairly he is one of the cricket finds of the century."¹⁵² In contrast to this 'The Gabber,' writing in The Sporting Globe, outlined some players' views from Queensland:

When asked if Gilbert had thrown out Bradman, a prominent Queensland player said. "He frightened him out."...

"New South Wales cricketers must be the world's champion squealers," was how a former Queensland player put it. "Criticism has followed almost every visit to Brisbane."¹⁵³

The controversy attracted considerable interest in the cricket world and the Sports Referee (Brisbane) was to suggest that "while his critics are outspoken, there are many men whose opinion is worth accepting who stoutly defend him."¹⁵⁴ For example, when Gilbert was last in Sydney he practised in the nets and came under "the close observation of a good judge like

---

¹⁵⁰ The Sporting Globe, 18 November 1931: 9.

¹⁵¹ The Brisbane Courier, November 1931: 8.

¹⁵² Armstrong, op.cit., 111.

¹⁵³ The Referee, 18 November 1931: 1.

¹⁵⁴ Sports Referee (Brisbane), 14 November 1931: 11.
Mailey, who expressed the conviction that his delivery was quite fair. It is interesting to note that Mailey had a role in the ‘talkie’ comments by Bradman.

It is in Gilbert’s favour that an astute critic like Arthur Mailey has favoured the aboriginal and named him as candidate for Test honours, while other writers also have been canvassing the possibility of Gilbert’s being given a chance in the Tests.

Mr. R. Hartigan, a former international cricketer and member of the Australian Board of Control, said that he had confidence in the umpires. "They have passed Gilbert, he said, and that will do me." ‘Point,’ writing in The Daily Mail (Brisbane), was to raise some concerns with regard to the questioning of the authority and judgement of the umpires:

The controversy concerning the fairness of Gilbert’s bowling has naturally brought the best judges, the umpires, into the discussion. The weight of their judgement favours Gilbert, and the opinions of the umpires, who are the sole judges, should be accepted by all cricket followers. It may, too, be pointed out regarding Gilbert’s bowling, that no hostile comment appeared in the southern papers from writers who have had a lifetime of cricket.

Mr. H. Weltzig, official scorer of the Queensland Cricket Association, had witnessed every representative game in Brisbane since 1904 and could not see any unfair delivery in the bowling of Gilbert. "I could name a dozen bowlers at least who, in their day, were far more destructive than Gilbert."

Gordon Amos was in the New South Wales team for this match but had previously played a number of times for Queensland. He was to later give his opinion about Gilbert’s bowling:

---

155 The Brisbane Courier, 12 November 1931: 5.
156 Sports Referee (Brisbane), 14 November 1931: 11.
157 The Referee, 18 November 1931: 5.
158 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 13 November 1931: 16.
159 ibid.
My idea I really thought he 'chucked' [threw] them because the way his arm came over. It was always like a 'chuck' to me. We knew to keep quiet. He wasn't the only fella that 'chucked' 'em.\textsuperscript{160}

The opinion of Amos was supported by Queensland player, Des Hansen, who firmly believed that Gilbert "threw occasionally – he threw a real fast one."\textsuperscript{161} One of "the stoutest defenders of Gilbert's delivery"\textsuperscript{162} the previous time it was questioned, former Queensland captain, Mr. Leo O'Connor, now expressed reservations.

"On the Friday, I wasn't satisfied with what I saw of some of Gilbert's deliveries" he remarked. "Consequently on the Saturday I borrowed a good pair of field glasses and took up a position at right angles to the pitch, where the sweep of Gilbert's arm could be most easily followed.

"Whenever Gilbert tried to get extra pace into the ball, he invariably bent his arm, and I would say definitely that he threw. This was most noticeable in his work. Several interstate players who were with me on Saturday were all of the same opinion as myself.\textsuperscript{163}

Mr. O'Connor was not in favour of banning Gilbert but "it is the duty of the umpire, if he has a doubt, to 'call' him for unfair delivery."\textsuperscript{164} Another former interstate cricketer for Queensland, Mr. W. Rowe, was also of the opinion that "Gilbert throws his fastest balls."\textsuperscript{165}

"I have no doubt about it," he remarked when spoken to last week. "I saw his over against Bradman, and in my opinion the N.S.Wales' manager's statement that he made an Aunt Sally of Bradman, was quite correct."\textsuperscript{166}

The State selectors made no comment on the matter at the time and drew attention to a rule that was passed by the Q.C.A., three months earlier, which prevented them from "making statements

\textsuperscript{160} Gordon Amos, personal interview, \textit{op.cit.}

\textsuperscript{161} Des Hansen, personal interview, \textit{op.cit.}

\textsuperscript{162} The Referee, 18 November 1931: 1.

\textsuperscript{163} ibid.

\textsuperscript{164} ibid.

\textsuperscript{165} ibid.

\textsuperscript{166} ibid.
in connection with important matches."\(^{167}\) Howell and Howell have said:

Cricket historian Pat Mullins spoke to Jack Farquhar, coach and selector at the time, and he said "Pure action. He did not chuck."...Stan Lord, who played with and against him many times, said emphatically that Gilbert did not throw.\(^{168}\)

Syd Regrave snr., had a long association with Queensland cricket, and was coach of the Queensland team whenever the players turned up to train after work on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

His son Syd Redgrave jnr., recalled:

A lot of people knew he did throw -- sometimes he threw -- not every ball -- but some balls he did throw. It was well-known around Brisbane that a few cricketers knew that Gilbert did throw one or two an over but then Bradman with New South Wales protested about his bowling. Did you know that he threw? They played Friday and Saturday, Monday and Tuesday. On the Wednesday at the Gabba The Daily Mail, I think...in those days sent a photographer out to get Eddie to bowl and they were going to take him to prove that he did not throw. Well, they took a photo and I don't know whether I should say this but I'll tell you now -- the first photo they took of him he threw. They said: "Now look Eddie. It is going to be in the paper and we are trying to prove you don't throw." So he bowled the next one and they took the photo and the next morning -- that was on Wednesday -- The Daily Mail on the Thursday they showed a picture of 5 or 6 photos - he had his hand down here, the next one his hand there, and his hand up here and his arm was straight. Across the top it said: 'Gilbert Does Not Throw'...Well I was playing A Grade cricket then with South Brisbane -- we were playing a team at the Gabba on the Saturday following the paper on the Thursday morning. On Saturday, a fellow named Harry Fewin, he worked at The Daily Mail, he was a Rugby League footballer for Queensland, and fullback for Australia -- said to me on Saturday: "You know Eddie Gilbert throws?" And I said: "No, I don't." He looked at me. He said: "Don't give me that, you know as well as I do that he throws." I said: "I don't know he throws." He looked at me quite surprised. He said: "Why do you say he doesn't throw?" "Because I'd seen an item in the paper." I didn't know "Mukka" [Fenwin] worked for The Daily Mail and I'd seen in the paper on Thursday that says he does not throw. He says: "Come into the office on Monday morning and I'll show the photo." Apparently, the first photo fellow took it and he had a bent arm but they made him do it again and the next time he had a straight arm. "You should come in Monday." I didn't go in but I know that he did know that he threw occasionally, but they said in the papers he did not throw so I'd leave it at that.

\(^{167}\) The Brisbane Courier. 12 November 1931: 5.

\(^{168}\) Prof. Max and Dr. Reet Howell. Unpublished paper presented to Sport History Conference, 1986. Copy supplied to researcher.
Dad knew that he threw. I'm telling you this confidentially. Dad told me that when Eddie Gilbert came off after bowling instead of getting a rub-down on your shoulder where you generally get a rub they'd rub Eddie down here on the elbow where he 'jerked' – that's where he got rubbed down. So I mean a lot of other people knew that. I knew he threw but he was never no-balled at all but when he got Bradman's wicket. If he hadn't have got those wickets there mightn't been a protest at all. I don't know why they kept on picking him in the team when they knew he no-balled. I never had much to do with him at all but I used to go and watch him play...I don't know if anyone ever told him he threw.

There was great interest in Gilbert. Firstly, because he was an Aborigine. Secondly, he had a short run and he was pretty fast. He was popular. I heard a lot of people talk about him mostly how fast he was off a short run and he wasn't a big fellow.169

After the game the secretary of the Queensland Cricket Association (Mr. Stephens) said "that no official complaint had been made by the visiting team."170 The Q.C.A. president, Mr. J.S. Hutcheon, was to diplomatically suggest: "Whether Gilbert throws or not, one would expect a calmer and more sensible statement from a New South Wales manager."171

It was considered most unlikely that the Queensland Cricket Association would take any action with regard to Mr. Rose's allegations. Mr. Hutcheon was to say:

The Queensland Cricket Association certainly did not wish to have in its eleven any bowler whose delivery could fairly be criticised in the sweeping terms employed by Mr. Rose, continued Mr. Hutcheon, but it must be remembered that when Gilbert first appeared against them in a shield match—in November, 1930—certain prominent New South Wales players were just as emphatic as Mr. Rose as to the unfairness of the delivery—yet Gilbert played for the Queensland side in all its matches last year, and was "passed" by every umpire whose business it was to make a decision from Mr. Hele downwards. And while the umpires were unanimous as to Gilbert's bowling, a visiting manager could scarcely be permitted to over-rule their views.172

169 Syd Redgrave jnr., personal interview, February 1992. No photographs of Gilbert's bowling action appeared on the day suggested by Mr. Redgrave although during the earlier match against South Australia a series of photographs were published in a couple of the papers.

170 The Referee, 18 November 1931: 1

171 The Daily Standard (Brisbane), 12 November 1931: 5.

172 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 14 November 1931: 5.
Mr. J.C. Davis, Editor of *The Referee*, was to use his Editorial column to support the actions of Mr. Rose.

Mr. A.L. Rose, manager of the New South Wales cricketers at Brisbane, has been criticised for venturing into the troubled sea of criticism of the umpires, for that is what it means when he states that Gilbert threw at Bradman and made an Aunt Sally of him. The New South Wales manager might have felt some diffidence about speaking in this way if his side had been beaten. But, having won, in the circumstances he is doing his duty to the game in saying what he has said when he and his team think as he speaks.

He was in Brisbane as the official representative of his association, and, with all due respect to armchair authorities, who look on such matters with an academic air, his duty to the game is not to gloss the matter over. If men holding official positions in cricket are not going to tackle problems of this nature, who is going to do so?

What would the world have said if Gilbert performed in the manner described against the South African batsmen and knocked out Cameron, the captain, or Taylor, the hero of many Tests...

The umpires evidently were caught napping for the over or two in which Gilbert transgressed...

The law provides that if either umpire be not satisfied of the absolute fairness of the delivery of any ball, he shall call "no-ball."^173

‘Grey Mare’ wrote to *The Referee* to point out the difficulties of seeing a "ball in the hands of a blackfellow."^174 ‘Not Out,’ agreed:

> There is something in the contention that it is more difficult to sight the ball leaving a black man’s hand than that of a white man. The difficulty is accentuated when the bowler is as fast as Gilbert. Those best in a position to tell if the bowler transgresses are the striker and his wicket-keeper. In such a case as Gilbert’s the umpire at square-leg would probably have the better view.^175

---

^173 *The Referee*, 18 November 1931: 12. Davis introduced his article with a quote:

> "Again I faced their man of pace, and a black mist hung o’er my eyes,
And I heard a roaring within my ears, like the sea when the breakers rise." - *Perford Allen*.

^174 *ibid.*, 9 December 1931: 14.

^175 *ibid.*
In the same article, and in reply to some criticism of Rose's action by 'Grey Mare,' another comment was made by 'Not Out:'

Many people have criticised the outspokenness of Mr. Rose. But when a man in a position he was filling, holds such views, and is supported by his players, he would be false to the game if he did not speak out. Silence is golden, but on occasions the reverse is the case, when silence might be observed by any jellyfish.  

Other cricket enthusiasts, such as Mr. A. Harding, were to write to the papers with their views:

I have seen every great bowler in England and Australia in action during the last 30 years, and after seeing Gilbert bowl I am confident he does not throw the ball. He has the ability, common to many black races, and quite uncommon to most white races, of laying his hands back on the forearm.  

'Ardent Admirer' also wrote:

I do not doubt that "our Eddie" bowls every ball, even his fastest deliveries. Despite the opinion of the "four southerners" to say that Gilbert throws the ball is a flimsy excuse for Bradman's being made an Aunt Sally...

I quite understand the feelings of Mr. Rose in having his champion batsman dismissed for a duck and humiliated in the eyes of the Queenslanders. If Queensland can produce a bowler of such talent why not give her credit?...

I only hope that the selectors will ignore the valueless criticism so kindly given by Mr. Rose, and give Eddie the greatest encouragement. I also hope that he has the chance of bowling Bradman again, for I know what will be the inevitable result--another "all-round" score for Bradman.  

According to The Daily Mail (Brisbane) of the 12th November 1931, the statement by Rose that Gilbert threw "was the sole topic of conversation at all clubs and haunts of sportsmen." The article went on to suggest: "In trams, trains, meeting places in the street--in fact, everywhere where cricketers and enthusiasts foregathered - there was nothing else discussed."
The commotion about Gilbert's action allowed every person to suddenly have an informed opinion. It so consumed the interest of the public that the presented outline on this issue represents only a small proportion of the argument it generated.
CHAPTER IV

THE SOUTHERN TOUR

The 'throwing' controversy in Brisbane almost claimed Eddie Gilbert as a victim. The Brisbane Courier was to report that "it is understood that the selectors will omit him from the Queensland eleven." The selectors had not been allowed to comment on the matter, but the paper said: "It is learned from a reliable source that he is purely a shock bowler, and is only good for a couple of overs." Len Allen, friend and mentor of Eddie Gilbert, worked for the Railway Department but he found time after the game to return to Barambah with Gilbert as his guest for a week. Amid all the controversy this visit raised a "great deal of conjecture and much gossip that more or less suggested that Gilbert was going into retirement to think things out." This was later refuted and it was reported that "Gilbert expects to go South with the Queensland team." It was a time that Gilbert relied on the 'advice' of his main supporters, Len Allen and Robert Crawford. Crawford recalled the visit of Allen:

"What's Eddie going to do?" "He's got a rough deal from some of those players." He said to me he had a good talk to Eddie. "You'd better go Eddie." Eddie said: "Or'right." Before he left he [Allen] said he [Gilbert] was going to be no-balled in Melbourne.1

1 The Brisbane Courier, 14 November 1931: 7.
2 ibid.
3 Smith's Weekly, 7 February 1932: 1.
4 ibid.
5 Robert Crawford, personal interview, tapes in possession of Mr. Harry Michel, Murgon.
About the same time as the suggestion that Gilbert might be omitted from the State team The Bulletin was to state:

With the first Test due to begin on November 27, Queensland cricketers are wondering whether the State will gain representation in the Australian side. The only player whose record suggests his inclusion is Oxenham. Another worth a trial is Gilbert, but he is unlikely to get it, the manager of the N.S.W. team recently having told the listening world that the abo. fast bowler is a thrower.  

Although the discussion about Gilbert as a Test cricketer was not intended to be serious there were others sources who were bold enough to indicate a role for him at this level. For example, The Referee was to propose Gilbert to the Test selectors in a perverse sort of way:

If they consider his delivery is without blemish, then the aboriginal should be the man for Australia against South Africa. 

If Gilbert is omitted from the Test team it will be construed by many that the selectors are not willing to risk his being no-balled.

Eddie Gilbert did gain selection in the State team to play South Africa but The Referee put some qualifications on his selection. 

As Gilbert has been chosen to play against South Africa on Friday, the selectors must be convinced that he will bowl in his normal way and not leave any doubt as to the fairness of his delivery. In that case all will be right.

While all the 'excitement' about Gilbert's bowling continued, the visiting South Africans were reported as being "curious regarding Gilbert, and inquired whether he had been selected to play with the Queensland team." The Referee put this interest it in a stronger way by suggesting that the South Africans had set up a "willow willow willy' [objection] because an Australian abo. has been picked in the Queensland team. Despite Gilbert's 'colour' and the speculation about his

---

7 The Referee, 11 November 1931: 24.
8 ibid.
9 The Brisbane Courier, 19 November 1931: 5.
10 ibid., 11 November 1931: 1.
method of bowling and the pace he gained off the wicket there was to be no complaint made about his inclusion in the Queensland team.

The match between South Africa and Queensland proved to be one in which fortunes fluctuated in a remarkable manner. It was a thrilling match and resulted in a draw, with honours even. Rain made play impossible on the opening day and on the next day Gough won the toss and decided to bat. The South African bowling looked first class early on, and at one stage Queensland were 3 for 21 and then later were 7 for 66. There was every indication that the score would not reach 100, but "the tail wagged furiously." Alex Hurwood, who had been tipped as the likely twelfth man before play commenced, played the innings of his career for 89 runs. He was ably supported by the young player Cook, and Gilbert, as they put on 131 runs to finish with a total of 202. Cook showed good defence in scoring 29 while Higgins made 25 runs.

The Referee, in reflecting the key role of the press in its depiction of Gilbert, carried a short article which indicated the popularity of Eddie Gilbert, "a fine type of aboriginal."

Eddie Gilbert is a Queensland hero. There is a public school overlooking Woolloongabba ground. The boys of that school cheered to the echo when Gilbert emerged from the pavilion to bat against the South Africans. One does not know what the youngsters did when Gilbert got rid of Bradman for that "blob."

Gilbert's display of fine form with the bat for Queensland was described:

Every stroke that Gilbert made was cheered, while there were roars of laughter when the aboriginal, in order to avoid a lightning return from Morkel, had to crouch on his hands and knees. He was just in time, as the throw knocked the middle stump out of the ground. There was a fresh outburst when he swung wildly to a ball on the leg and narrowly missed the wicketkeeper's head.

---

12 The Referee, 2 December 1931: 13.
13 Ibid. Des Hansen in a personal interview (June 1992) also recalled Gilbert "strutting out to bat at the Gabba and all the East Brisbane kids at the school yelling 'C'mon Eddie."
14 The Brisbane Courier, 23 November 1931: 7.
Gilbert scored four runs off the first over he faced, and he was cheered when, a short time later, by scoring off Quinn, he ran into double figures. His "amble between the wickets amused the crowd" but he defended sturdily. Eddie Gilbert stayed at the wickets for 45 minutes, "during which period Hurwood's lusty blade built up a fine partnership of 63 runs." Just after hitting a four to reach 16, "He attempted a big hit, was caught out of his crease, and stumped," off the bowling of Vincent. Vincent proved to be the most successful bowler for South Africa, taking 5 for 59.

The visitors opened their innings cautiously:

Many pairs of binoculars were on Eddie Gilbert, the aboriginal fast bowler, when he opened the attack to Mitchell. Cameron, the South African captain, at the termination of play, was asked to express an opinion, but he refused to commit himself, beyond saying. "He is a freak."

The comment by Cameron attempted to steer well clear of the race controversy surrounding Gilbert yet in a way it touches on this very issue.

Hurwood, Thurlow, and Oxenham were mainly responsible in dismissing the South Africans for 195, which was 7 runs short of Queensland's first innings total. None of the batsmen reached 50, which was a tribute to the sustained strength of the Queensland attack. Taylor top-scored with 48. The innings ended when Quinn was out first ball to Gilbert for no score. Bowling figures for Queensland saw Thurlow perform well for his team and take 3 for 26, while Hurwood took 3 for 79 and Oxenham 2 for 31. Early in the visitor's innings Hurwood was unlucky to have Curnow missed in slips when "Gilbert got his hands to it low and deflected it towards Thurlow at second slip, but the man of speed couldn't quite reach it." Gilbert's

---


16 The Brisbane Courier, 23 November 1931: 7.

17 Ibid.

18 The Age (Melbourne), 23 November 1931: 5.

delivery was unquestioned but he only secured 1 for 32, off 11.1 overs. He did not prove to be as effective as he had been against New South Wales and was fairly erratic early on and did not trouble the batsmen. His bowling was not as fast "and his balls did not kick up or fly off the pitch."\(^{20}\)

Queensland showed a urgent need for good opening batsmen when they once again made a poor start. At one stage they had 4 wickets down for 9 runs before Gough became associated with Hansen in 61 run partnership which saved Queensland from being routed. Hansen's score of 65 "stamped him as one of the best Queensland colts of recent years."\(^{21}\) Gilbert was out without scoring when "he hit the ball with tremendous force, and the ball flew slightly towards the on, but Mitchell flung out his right hand and pulled off a spectacular catch."\(^{22}\) Queensland's final score was 156. For South Africa, Brown took 4 for 26, off 14.2 overs and Quinn bundled out 3 for 30.

South Africa started their second innings with 164 runs to win and 3 hours to make them. Gilbert did not open the bowling but when he came on it was a 'new' Gilbert, who bowled right at the wicket all the time. "Mitchell was completely at sea facing the great pace of the aboriginal, and it caused no surprise when...Gilbert gained his wicket."\(^{23}\)

Oxenham helped subdue the batsmen for a time but then the batsmen decided to make a bid for victory.

\(^{20}\) ibid.

\(^{21}\) The Brisbane Courier, 25 November 1931: 5.

\(^{22}\) ibid.

\(^{23}\) ibid.
Viljoen, who had earlier been restrained, opened up to Gilbert, and collected 18 off one over, thus vastly improving the visitor's position. The aboriginal, however, prevailed in the next over, wicketkeeper Burns snapping up a catch, and dismissing Cumow. Forty-two runs had resulted from the partnership, Gilbert, who had changed ends, continued his triumph, Dalton played a ball which completely beat him with its pace. Gilbert had taken three wickets for 27.

Gilbert later had Viljoen out when he swung wildly at a bumping ball. He skied the ball to wicketkeeper Burns who took an easy catch. In his last bowling spell Gilbert was obviously tired and his "pace had dropped almost to medium, but he had more than justified himself." With the Queensland bowling tight and the run rate climbing to over two a minute the visitors made no real attempt to get the runs and the match ended in a draw. Viljoen scored 48 and Cumow 32. Gilbert, bowling at times with real speed, was the main wicket-taker with 4 for 42, off 11 overs, and including 4 maidens. Oxenham, bowled with "guile and immaculate length," and took 2 for 27. Although Thurlow and Hurwood shared the bowling honours in the first innings they were both 'ineffective' in the second innings.

As a result of his performances and personal qualities Gilbert was able to gain a greater level of acceptance, on the sporting field, at least, than he otherwise would have been able to achieve as an Aborigine. The Sports Referee (Brisbane) was to comment:

> The public makes no bones about the way in which Gilbert has established himself in public favour. Repeatedly the Queensland captain was urged to put Gilbert on, and when, in his own good time, Gough complied, there were roars of approval, which were repeated when the aboriginal put down an extra fast one that shaved the stumps, and left batsmen standing flat-footed.

> Gilbert has proved beyond doubt that his real value is that of a shock bowler, who is capable of breaking the most formidable partnership.

> There is no doubt about his pace in his first two overs.27

---

24 ibid.

25 Sports Referee (Brisbane), 28 November 1931: 11.

26 ibid.

27 ibid.
In reporting on the match The Brisbane Courier "failed to discover that Gilbert is anything but a fair bowler...he can, at times, direct the ball on the wicket, and that he can bowl a ball of good length". 

Eddie Gilbert, the article was to suggest, "is a very good box-office attraction." 

One young lad said: "It took me four days to get Eddie Gilbert's autograph...but it was worth it."

After the game 'Jock' Cameron, the South African captain, told the reporter for the Sports Referee (Brisbane): "I still don't know where he gets his pace. He is such a frail little fellow. I don't think he will last more than three years of first-class cricket."

'Five Ways,' of The Bulletin, summed up Eddie's performance:

The aboriginal bowler Gilbert afforded an interesting study in psychology during the Queensland match with South Africa. Though he had played through the Sheffield Shield series last season without challenge, a statement by an unauthorised person that he was throwing against N.S.W. in Brisbane recently was taken up by Sydney papers, which worked the accusation for all it was worth. Obviously ill at ease, and apprehensive that he might be no-balled at any moment, the boy gave an erratic exhibition of bowling in the South African [first] innings. With his mind at ease in the second innings, Gilbert skittled the first four South African batsmen for 38 runs.

No sooner had the match ended than Eddie was in the papers again. Under the main heading of, 'WILL THEY TOUR WITH EDDIE GILBERT?,' the Truth (Brisbane) outlined the problem which was a repeat of some concerns expressed before the southern tour the year before:

---

28 The Brisbane Courier, 25 November 1931: 5.
29 ibid.
30 Truth (Brisbane), 6 December 1931: 5.
31 Sports Referee (Brisbane), 28 January 1933: 6.
Eddie Gilbert, Queensland aboriginal bowling wonder, public idol, creator of several Australia-wide sensations, has caused many stirs since his entry into big cricket, but this week he is unconsciously the centre of another fuss which may rift Queensland cricket.

"Truth" is in a position to state that the delay which is taking place in the announcement of the Queensland team to tour the South is due to the probability of a threatened strike of players if Gilbert is included. On his form in the New South Wales and South African matches it was very unlikely that Gilbert would not be selected to tour. He had taken 4 for 74 against New South Wales and 4 for 42 against South Africa and the "latter performance clinched his claim to continuance in the team." Despite being considered a certainty for a state position there were those also in line for the State team who had indicated that they were not keen to play in the same team with him.

He had been hailed as a magnificent success. But the other players' objections raised a serious difficulty. If certain of the men who undoubtedly form the backbone of the team, by reason of their experience and knowledge and reliability, refused to make the trip in the company of Gilbert, it would be farcical to send a collection of second-raters on an expensive tour in quest of the Sheffield Shield.

ANOTHER SCANDAL?

And if the team were announced and there were subsequent withdrawals, a fresh scandal would be created in Queensland cricket, which, coming on top of the several which have been either common knowledge or openly talked about in cricket circles, would do the game much harm.

That was the pretty little problem which faced the Queensland selectors when they met to pick the team. Leave Gilbert out, and create a new public outcry against themselves, or put him in and risk a "strike" of players.

What will they do? Exclude Gilbert, and create a pretty little public sensation, or include him—and allow some other players to create a pretty little public sensation for reasons—whatever they might be—that the sporting public of the State are not likely to accept or applaud.

33 Truth (Brisbane), 29 November 1931: 7.

34 ibid.
Gilbert’s career in big cricket has been a series of more or less exciting incidents. When it was first suggested that he be brought to Brisbane to play in the State side, the Chief Protector of Aboriginals insisted that he should be permanently in the care of some responsible person and would not allow him to be quartered at a hotel or boarding house.

Gilbert’s next trouble was a question of his delivery when bowling, and special motion pictures were taken with the aboriginal in the leading (and sole) role.

These, in the opinion of experts, did not disclose any unfairness about his delivery, and he duly went South with the Queensland team.

Next was the suggestion that the South Africans might object to him on racial grounds, and after that came the outburst of Mr. Rose, manager of the New South Wales team, that, pictures or no pictures, Gilbert definitely threw at Bradman, and other N.S.W. batsmen.

Poor Eddie! The sea of troubles that surrounded Shakespeare’s soliloquist was only a dishful compared to the ocean that Eddie has been swamped in since he came into big cricket.

But anyhow Gilbert is a mighty fine cricketer and a perfect gentleman. Queensland should not lose him through snobbery or exotic ideas imported from South Africa or anywhere else.35

The attitudes and openly hostile comments of some of the State players towards Gilbert were in contrast to the popular crowd support he received. Despite the privately expressed views of some players there were also those in the squad who endeavoured to make Gilbert feel welcome and a part of the team.36

Two weeks after the South African match Queensland’s bowler Oxenham was selected in the First Test. Oxenham had, to this point of time, taken 6 wickets for 137 at an average of 22.83 runs per wicket, whereas Gilbert had 9 for 148, at 18.22 runs per wicket. Oxenham was a very useful all-rounder and this would have been a significant point in his favour.

---

35 ibid., 29 Nov 1931: 7.

36 Des Hansen, personal interview, op.cit. Informants such as Des Hansen and Ezra Wyeth hinted at the names of a few players who may have been involved.
Figure 4.1 A section of the crowd watching the Queensland versus South Africa game.

Figure 4.2 Gilbert stumped by Van der Merwe off Vincent’s bowling.
Before the Queensland team to tour was finally announced the Q.C.A. made application to the Chief Protector of Aboriginals "for Eddie Gilbert to be a member of the Queensland Representative Touring Team."\(^{37}\) Shortly afterwards it was rumoured that Gilbert, "hurt by various criticisms of him and his methods of bowling would refuse the invitation to tour."\(^{38}\) Gilbert quickly denied these suggestions by "saying that he was anxious to go, and would go."\(^{39}\)

The *Truth* (Brisbane) reminded readers about the team selection problem of the southern tour a year earlier and suggested that little was "being done to promote harmony between the high-hatted Q.C.A. and the men who bring the crowds flocking."\(^{40}\)

Queensland's team of touring cricketers leaves this week for the south. On the corresponding tour last year there occurred happenings which rifted the game in the State dividing players and officials into armed camps. What has been done to prevent another happening of this kind? While the thought of possible trouble is farthest from the minds of players and supporters of the game, there is one thing that stands out like a ghost on a dark night, and that is that in Queensland cricket there is a showing lack of "lubrication" of the playing machine.\(^{41}\)

The allowance for the Queensland cricketers on tour was 12/6d. a day in addition to meals and accommodation. A special arrangement was made for Gilbert to be given 5/- a day to use and for 7/6d to be paid into his account.\(^{42}\)

The financial considerations with regard to Gilbert's career are a recurring theme and have been mentioned before. Cricket in the thirties offered few opportunities for financial gain. Like many others who had talent Gilbert was to struggle to overcome the financial burden of representing the State. Because of the efforts of Superintendent Semple, Gilbert was to obtain

\(^{37}\) Eddie Gilbert, personal file, Queensland Department of Community Services, 1988, letter from the Queensland Cricket Association, dated 5 December 1931.

\(^{38}\) *The Referee*, 9 December 1931: 9.

\(^{39}\) ibid.

\(^{40}\) *Truth* (Brisbane) 13 December 1931: 5.

\(^{41}\) ibid.

\(^{42}\) Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit., memo 1931.
some extra monetary assistance from the Q.C.A. In addition to this assistance from the Q.C.A., Gilbert was also supported from sporting funds raised by the inmates at the settlement.

Money and the security it offered were important to most people. The Queensland team arrived in Melbourne around the same time as a talented Aboriginal Australian Rules footballer, Doug Nicholls, announced that he was taking up a boxing contract to make more money because "an unskilled and uneducated Aborigine had to survive as best he could."^43

His first contest was a ten-round event against Roy Stanley at the Fitzroy Stadium. The Aboriginal fast bowler was in town for a Sheffield Shield match and acted as Nicholls' second. Unfortunately, Gilbert's moral support was not enough, Nicholls lost that fight but he went on to win the majority of his fights and was a crowd-pleaser.44

When Gilbert attended the fight, "The crowd gave him a particularly good hand when the announcer introduced him."^45

For the game against Queensland, the Victorians were without a number of players. However, it was a match that was to provide one of the most sensational incidents in the history of Australian cricket to that time. The atmosphere largely contributed to this as before the match a number of newspapers were conveying the impression that Gilbert's bowling action was not above suspicion.46

---


^44 *ibid.*

Of all Aboriginal sportsmen, Nicholls was perhaps the greatest success, whose sporting talents included Australian football and boxing as well as running. But Nicholls was more than a sportsman. He was the first Aborigine to receive an MBE in 1957; the first to become Father of the Year in 1962; the first to become a justice of the peace in 1963 and the first to be honoured with a knighthood from the Queen in 1972. As a church leader and Aboriginal rights activist, Nicholls campaigned for social justice...Nicholls' ultimate achievement was his appointment as Governor of South Australia in 1976, 27.


Queensland gained an advantage when they won the toss, "and batted on a good wicket, which was not too fast." Despite this the Queensland batting lacked enterprise and the total made was 200. Cook showed "good defence, excelling on the leg" in compiling his total of 44. Gilbert made 5 runs, not out. The Victorian bowling in this innings was moderately good. Nagel, "who was able to swing the ball well," achieved the best bowling figures of 4 for 45.

A Sensational Event

When Queensland took the field there was, as usual, great interest in the performance of Eddie Gilbert. "During the day it had been freely whispered that umpire Barlow would no-ball Gilbert. And the prophets were right. Gilbert’s over proved sensational." Ryder and Lee opened the batting for Victoria at 5.38 p.m. The former took strike and began with two runs on the on-side off Gilbert’s first delivery. Gilbert then bowled an extremely short ball that rose high above Ryder’s head, and went for a single. Lee began with a single to third man. Barlow, the umpire, then created a great sensation by no-balling Gilbert on four successive occasions, "owing to the aboriginal’s doubtful deliveries."

Gough, the Queensland captain, made a point of asking Barlow the reason why he had ‘no-balled’ Gilbert and each time the answer was: "For jerking the wrist. Barlow was emphatic on that." After a word from his captain, Gilbert reduced his pace and completed the over without further action being taken. Ryder drove one delivery from Gilbert past cover for 4 (all run). Hurwood then bowled the next over from the pavilion end, and Thurlow relieved Gilbert at

---

47 ibid.
48 ibid.
49 ibid.
50 The Daily Standard (Brisbane), 23 December 1931: 15.
51 The Leader (Melbourne), 26 December 1931: 19.
52 The Age (Melbourne), 24 December 1931: 5.
the southern end.

Amidst great cheering Gilbert replaced Hurwood at the pavilion end, and Ryder skied his first delivery, that was short, high above the wickets, and was caught by the wicket-keeper to the great delight of the crowd, who were pleased that the aboriginal had secured a wicket. 1-10-17.\(^53\)

McCormick was next man in and Moore was the umpire at the bowling end. Moore took no action, "but Barlow, from square-leg, signalled no ball four times. Play ended after Gilbert had bowled two overs, but there is much speculation regarding the attitude of Barlow to-morrow."\(^54\)

The first ball and some other fast balls during the over were not called by Barlow; "but one of the fieldsmen was standing in his way, and sometimes obstructed the view, for Barlow had to move about."\(^55\) After being called the first time it was noticeable that Gilbert, "in an apparent endeavour to satisfy the umpire...changed his action from a round-arm to a high delivery. The first high delivery was not called but the next was."\(^56\)

Victoria had scored 1 for 25 by the close of play on the Friday but this was virtually "lost sight of in view of the persistent no-balling of Gilbert."\(^57\) When the players left the field "a special cheer was given to Gilbert, who had many sympathisers, whilst Barlow, the umpire, was hooted loudly."\(^58\)

\(^{53}\) The Leader (Melbourne), 26 December 1931: 19.

\(^{54}\) Sydney Morning Herald, 19 December 1931: 20.

\(^{55}\) The Australian Cricketer, December 1931.

\(^{56}\) ibid.

\(^{57}\) The Brisbane Courier, 19 December 1931: 7.

\(^{58}\) The Leader (Melbourne), 26 December 1931: 19.
## Figure 4.3 Queensland versus Victoria match summary.

### Victoria vs. Queensland

**At Melbourne, December 15, 15, and 17**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1st Innings</th>
<th>2nd Innings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. J. Gough (c), lbw, b. a'Beckett</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>b. a'Beckett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. K. Oxenham, b. Smith</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>b. Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. E. P. Hogg, b. Nagel</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>b. Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Hansen, c. Ryder, b. Nagel</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>c. and b. Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. C. Cook, run out</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>c. Fontaine (sub.), b. a'Beckett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. W. Sides, lbw, b. McCornick</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>thrown out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Thomas, b. Bensted</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>b. McCornick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Bensted, c. Barnett, b. McCornick</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>b. McCornick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. C. Cook, run out</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>c. Fontaine (sub.), b. a'Beckett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. W. Thurlow, b. Smith</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>c. Burns, b. Gilbert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Darling, lbw, b. Oxenham</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>c. Burns, b. Oxenham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Gilbert, not out</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>b. Burns, b. Oxenham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundries: B. 0, lbw. 7, mnb. 7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>b. Burns, b. Oxenham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 200</td>
<td></td>
<td>Total 213</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fall:** 17, 39, 57, 89, 123, 151, 188, 197, 206

**Time:** 28G minutes.

### Queensland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1st Innings</th>
<th>2nd Innings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Ryder (c), e. Burns, b. Gilbert</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>e. Burns, b. Thurlow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Lye, lbw, b. Hurwood</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>b. Thurlow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. L. McCornick, at. Burns, b. Oxenham</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>b. McCornick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. M. Thurlow, b. Oxenham</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>b. Oxenham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Thomas, b. Bensted</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>b. McCornick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. L. a'Beckett, lbw, b. Oxenham</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>b. McCornick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Darling, lbw, b. Oxenham</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>b. Oxenham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Scarfe, b. Bensted</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>b. Oxenham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Smith, c. Hansen, b. Oxenham</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>c. Burns, b. Oxenham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. E. Nagel, not out</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>c. Burns, b. Oxenham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundries: B. 4, lbw. 4, w. 1, mnb. 1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>c. Burns, b. Oxenham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 150</td>
<td></td>
<td>Total 152</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fall:** 17, 51, 61, 62, 129, 140, 130, 130, 142, 136, 146, 155, 156.

**Time:** 35 minutes.

### Queensland Manager Protests: “Delivery Perfectly Fair”

**BY THE HERALD CRICKET WRITER**

### GILBERT NO-BALLED AGAIN

**Umpire Hooted in Shield Game on M.C.G.**

**ABORIGINE TAKEN OFF**

Queensland Manager Protests: “Delivery Perfectly Fair”

**BY THE HERALD CRICKET WRITER**

### Figure 4.4 'Gilbert No-balled Again' - newspaper headline
The next morning *The Age* (Melbourne) commented:

Unfortunately a section, in a most unsportsmanlike manner, vigorously hooted Barlow. It must be assumed that Barlow does not regard his duties lightly, nor that he is unaware of the serious effect of "calling" a bowler because his delivery may be doubtful. Therefore, it takes some moral courage for an umpire to take a step which in most instances means forcing a player out of the game. Gilbert may or may not throw the ball; it is...impartiality on this matter from the press box.\(^5^9\)

The reaction against Barlow had also included a small crowd in the members' reserve. The chairman of the executive of the Victorian Cricket Association, Mr. W.I. Kelly, stated that

...he resented the hostile demonstration against the umpire, Barlow, in the members' reserve at the conclusion of play. He said that Barlow not only had been hooted, but insulting remarks had been hurled against him. Barlow was recognised as an efficient and conscientious umpire, and the demonstration against him was most unjustifiable. He (Mr. Kelly) intended to make an emphatic protest to the Melbourne Cricket Club in regard to the matter.\(^6^0\)

Before the real reason for the calling of Gilbert came to light after the day's play the suggestion was made, and accepted by many people, that Gilbert "had been no-balled because he lifted his right foot off the ground at the moment of delivering the ball."\(^6^1\) *The Herald* (Melbourne) was to end this speculation.

Gough said it was drawing a red herring across the trail to suggest that Barlow no-balled Gilbert because he lifted his right foot off the ground at the moment of delivering the ball. "It was the wrist action only that was questioned," he asserted.\(^6^2\)

The morning after the incident *The Brisbane Courier* carried a story that the team manager had requested another bowler be sent south if Gilbert was no-balled again. In replying to this rumour the Q.C.A. president (J.S. Hutcheon), and secretary (R.T. Stephens) stated that, "no such request had been made and no steps were being taken in anticipation of the umpire repeating his

\(^5^9\) *The Age* (Melbourne), 19 December 1931: 6.

\(^6^0\) *ibid.*, 5.

\(^6^1\) *The Referee*, 23 December 1931: 15.

\(^6^2\) *The Herald* (Melbourne), 23 December 1931: 1.
decision.\textsuperscript{63}

Play continued in beautifully fine weather on the Saturday morning and when the ball was thrown to Gilbert to bowl the crowd cheered 'lustily.'

Gough, the Queensland captain, showed his belief in the fairness of the delivery of Gilbert by opening the Queensland attack with him again today. Yesterday in Gilbert's two overs Umpire Barlow called eight deliveries as throws.

Barlow caused further sensation by no-balling Gilbert's first delivery today. He repeated the call on the second, third, sixth and ninth deliveries. The eleventh was given a wide by Umpire Moore.

Gilbert's over therefore read: No ball, no ball, no ball, 2 runs obtained, ball, ball, no ball, ball, ball, no ball, ball, wide, ball, ball, ball.

Umpire Barlow was standing at square leg. Umpire Moore, as was the case yesterday, passed Gilbert's action. After the opening over Hurwood replaced Gilbert.

The crowd jeered Umpire Barlow, telling him to "get off the ground." The heckling continued, and broke out afresh when Barlow later called Thurlow for dragging his foot across the crease.\textsuperscript{64}

Barlow was accorded "the worst reception given any umpire in Australia"\textsuperscript{65} as "the crowd jeered and hooted him"\textsuperscript{66} during the over. It was suggested that "Gilbert must have thought it was Manager Rose who was wearing the white coat."\textsuperscript{67} Gilbert bowled 14 deliveries before the over could be completed. He was so unsettled that the wide he sent down after his fifth ball passed the stumps on the full. During the over, Barlow, in reply to questioning from Gough about the reason for the calling of Gilbert, was to say: "Jerking the arm," but immediately corrected himself

\textsuperscript{63} The Brisbane Courier, 19 December 1931: 7.

\textsuperscript{64} The Sporting Globe, 19 December 1931: 5. Although the match reports presented here suggest that 13 'no-balls' were bowled by Gilbert he in fact only bowled eleven. Six were bowled in his first two overs and five in his third over.

\textsuperscript{65} The Daily Standard (Brisbane), 18 December 1931: 6.

\textsuperscript{66} ibid., 19 December 1931: 5.

\textsuperscript{67} ibid. Rose was the New South Wales manager.
to say "jerking the wrist." This was the same as the reason given the day before. Amidst the sympathetic demonstration from the crowd Gilbert was ‘taken off’ by Gough and was not to bowl again in the match. A touch of humour was injected into the drama by Queensland player, Des Hansen, who recalled:

We had ‘Pud’ Thurlow bowling and he said: "What are they [crowd] doing having a ‘go’ [jeering] at me. I didn’t do anything." We said: "They’re not having a ‘go’ at you, they’re having a ‘go’ at Barlow." [Laugh]

Despite the sensations of the morning there was no crowd demonstration as the players and umpires walked off the field at the luncheon interval but the no-balling of Gilbert was reported to have upset the players, including the batsmen.

Later in the innings Umpire Barlow was to disallow a couple of confident appeals for dismissals by the Queenslanders.

Much sympathy was felt for Gilbert, who remained in a position in the field through the remainder of the Victorian innings. There were repeated calls from the "outer" to "put Gilbert on." The aborigine was said to be unperturbed, but he must have felt his position rather keenly.

There is always some apprehension associated with performance in sport and with it a heightened sense of anticipation which can cause stress and anxiety. The challenge, for the performer, is to maintain emotional and mental control. Eddie Gilbert, by his actions, was to display a strength of character and level of courage which was admirable.

Of the incident, The Herald (Melbourne) cricket writer was to suggest:

Barlow was carrying out strictly his conception of his obligations under the laws of cricket. These state that "the ball must not be thrown or jerked, and that either umpire shall call no ball if he is not satisfied with the absolute fairness of any delivery."

__

68 ibid.


70 The Herald (Melbourne), 20 December 1931: 6.

71 ibid.
It was interesting to compare the sports page of *The Age* (Melbourne), in the first edition after the incident. In a column next to a heading, 'Gilbert Again No-Balled,' was a report that Bradman had scored 112 for Australia in a Test match against South Africa. The dramatic change in fortunes of the two since their encounter in Brisbane a few weeks earlier was clearly contrasted.

The Victorians compiled a total of 156 in their innings. The batting was of a low standard and did not prove to be impressive apart from that of Darling and Thomas. Darling played fairly bright cricket before being out lbw to Oxenham for 52. Early in the Victorian innings, Queensland player Hurwood left the field with a cut hand. When the no-balling of Gilbert and the injury to Hurwood are considered, "the Queenslanders put up a sterling performance." Oxenham, "with his variations of pace and flight," bowled brilliantly to secure 5 for 37. Bensted rose to the occasion and took 3 for 28, while the 'embattled' Gilbert had the bowling average of 1 for 10.

Queensland opened the second innings confidently and after a good start the first wicket fell at 83. Queensland batsmen, by defensive batting, took the innings total to 251. Hogg, the opener, scored 47 runs and left-handed batsman Hansen shaped neatly for 43. When Gilbert went out to bat he was "received with sympathetic cheering, which was renewed when he clouted Smith to the on-side to score 2." In a piece of bright fielding "Oakley spreadeagled Gilbert's wicket from side-on," as Gilbert was vainly trying to scramble back to his crease after backing up too far. He had scored 5 runs. Victorian bowler Smith created "a fine impression with his

---

72 *The Age* (Melbourne), 21 December 1931: 4.

73 *The Referee*, 23 December 1931: 12.

74 ibid.

75 *The Age* (Melbourne), 22 December 1931: 12.

76 ibid.
excellent length and stamina" to take 5 for 96, off 32.5 overs, with 5 maidens. The other wicket-taker was a’Beckett, who took 2 for 64. Good fielding by the Victorians resulted in three run-outs.

Victoria required 296 to win when they commenced their second innings and they made a great recovery, after early failures, and missed victory by 22 runs. A feature of the performance was a 99 run ninth wicket partnership between Barnett and Smith. Barnett showed good judgment and restraint in his innings of 94 while Smith was out after he had scored 47 runs. The success of the Queensland team in winning the game was outstanding in view of the loss of Gilbert and was mainly due to the bowling of Oxenham, Thurlow, and Hurwood. All three bowled well and shared in the wickets. Oxenham took 4 for 64, Thurlow 3 for 69, and Hurwood ended the match with 3 for 55. Bensted, the Queensland bowler, had earlier also left the field injured and this had added to the visitor’s bowling worries. Near the end of the match Thurlow was also ‘crocked’ and unable to bowl.

In summing up the match ‘Southerner,’ of The Referee said:

Except for the Gilbert incident, the Victoria v Queensland game at Melbourne was a dull affair. Spectators were bored by wearisome cricket and engaged in discussions of the question, "Does Gilbert throw?"

The controversy about Eddie Gilbert’s bowling had come to a ‘head’ during the game. B. Hay, writing for The Daily Standard (Brisbane) believed that the incident was going to happen "because of the comments made by Rose the New South Wales manager." Hay further suggested that Rose’s "remarks were regarded as being in shocking taste."

77 The Referee, 23 December 1931: 12.
78 The Referee, 23 December 1931: 15.
79 The Daily Standard (Brisbane), 19 December 1931: 5.
80 ibid.
Holdsworth, the Queensland manager, and Len Allen, the mentor of Eddie Gilbert, had both apparently indicated to Mr. and Mrs. Crawford, back at the settlement, that Gilbert would be no-balled when he went south and that "the southern umpires would 'get' him."\(^{81}\) Holdsworth sent a telegram to them after the match "informing them that he had been unfairly no-balled."\(^{82}\)

'Fairgo,' writing for The Daily Standard (Brisbane), suggested how the events in Melbourne had been predicted:

> When the first test was being played at Brisbane, a well-known Australian player told me that Gilbert would not get to Sydney. When I asked the reason, he just remarked, "Remember what I said." I wonder what he knew.\(^{83}\)

Hay, under the story-heading of, 'GILBERT DOES NOT THROW,' was to assert:

> No cricket incident in Melbourne for years has caused a sensation as the "calling" of Eddie Gilbert by Umpire A.N. Barlow, in the Shield match. The fact that Gilbert is an aborigine and is simple and conscientious combines with the unanimity of opinion on the fairness of his delivery to make a first class sensation.

> I have spoken to every old cricketer of any standing I have been able to find, and all declare that there is nothing suspicious about the delivery. One man who bowled for Australia in a test match goes further, and declares that it is a physical impossibility for Gilbert owing to the speed at which he swings his arm.\(^{84}\)

H.A. de Lacy, of The Sporting Globe, used an analysis of Gilbert's action alone to make a judgment in support of him.

> This morning I watched Gilbert in action through a strong pair of field glasses. Gilbert's delivery appeared perfectly fair. Alternatively, I cannot divine a difference between the action in delivering the ball that was called and the ball that was passed as legitimate. I consider that each of the 14 balls delivered was free from any suggestion of elbow-jerk. In delivering each ball Gilbert maintained a perfectly stiff elbow and a legitimate sweep of the arm.\(^{85}\)

---

\(^{81}\) Robert Crawford, interview, op.cit.

\(^{82}\) ibid.

\(^{83}\) The Daily Standard (Brisbane), 19 December 1931: 5.

\(^{84}\) ibid.

\(^{85}\) The Sporting Globe, 19 December 1931: 5.
The Herald (Melbourne) cricket writer, in echoing the support of the fairness of Gilbert’s bowling, wrote of Gilbert’s bowling performance on the second day of the match:

Watching Gilbert’s action closely from the boundary, my opinion was that every one of his 14 deliveries today was made with a clear sweep of the arm and no jerk of the elbow.

From off the field, no difference was perceptible in his action for balls that were debared, and balls that were passed.  

Another paper, The Leader (Melbourne), was to report:

The question of whether the aboriginals’ delivery is fair or not created much discussion, and a large number of enthusiasts expressed the opinion that the bowler’s action was not doubtful. However, it is extremely difficult to judge it with any degree of accuracy from outside the enclosure. The umpire was in the best position to give a decision, and is the sole judge of fair and unfair play. It is his duty to call “no ball” if he is not satisfied with absolute fairness of the delivery of any ball, and Barlow should be commended for his courage.

---

86 The Herald (Melbourne), 19 December 1931: 8.
87 The Leader (Melbourne), 26 December 1931: 19.
Figure 4.6 'Throw or bowl?' - the special photograph of Gilbert's bowling.
"A Melbourne paper published special photographs of deliveries to which Barlow objected, and no fault could be found with his action. The Referee also published various photographs of Gilbert's deliveries. It was suggested that slow motion pictures could be taken "to settle this vexed question." These were taken and shown in theatres around the country. This new film was screened in the Capitol newsreel two nights later and very shortly afterwards was shown in theatres around Australia. It showed him at normal speed and in slow-motion from four angles.

The Telegraph (Brisbane) was to describe the audience reaction to this film in Brisbane. The outlined response may, in part, be an example of how Australians love to 'champion' the underdog but it may also serve to illustrate and support previous statements about how Gilbert's involvement in cricket allowed people to make some exception to their normal opinions of Aborigines as a group.

Barrackers may champion the legality of Gilbert's bowling for technical reasons, but amid his recent trials and tribulations the genial aborigine has touched the hearts of all sorts of people who do not know a "googly" from a fast "long hop."

Loud applause greeted the Queensland aboriginal bowler when he appeared on the screen at the Capitol on Monday night in a news reel. Women and children joined in a spontaneous expression of sympathy. The news reel shows Gilbert in action at ordinary speed and then at slow motion. It makes clear what has already been supported by anatomists: That the structure of Gilbert's humerus (upper arm) and a "double-jointed" elbow permit him to swing his arm in a convex curve and to straighten it out forward at the moment of delivery. In a white man with an arm of normal structure any such forward motion would constitute a throw, but can the same be said of Gilbert's action when he is merely bringing his arm back into a straight line?"

"I do not think I throw," says Gilbert in a talkie speech attached to the film "but if this film shows that I do, it is not intentional, because cricket is too good a game to have any such suspicions associated with it". More applause greeted this expression of a sportsmanlike attitude.

88 The Daily Standard (Brisbane), 18 December 1931: 6.

89 The Referee, 30 December 1931: 10; The Herald (Melbourne), 22 December 1931: 12.
Although the news reel reveals that at the time the film was taken Gilbert's action was almost certainly legal, it cannot settle the controversy. To do this a film would have to be taken actually at the time when he was being no-balled by the umpire.90

This last point about fairness on all deliveries was one that various commentators would make.

The Australian Cricketer analysed the situation:

Gilbert has extraordinarily long arms. His forearm is very long, and he has a large hand, with very long fingers. From the pictures taken of his action, he appears to be double-jointed at the elbow, and his wrist comes right back before delivering the ball. No official statements have been made on Barlow's behalf, but it is understood that he considers that a bowler can throw or jerk with the shoulder, elbow or wrist. Barlow gave the wrist jerk as his reason for "calling" Gilbert when questioned by Gough, the Queensland captain.91

The Queensland team manager, Holdsworth, focussed on certain inconsistencies by Barlow:

The Queenslanders are particularly incensed. Mr. J.H. Holdsworth, their manager and a selector, says that slow motion pictures of his deliveries had been taken and the results showed that Gilbert's action was quite fair. Barlow had no-balled some deliveries and passed others which were the same. He held that all Gilbert's deliveries were either fair or unfair.92

Mr. Holdsworth stated that the Queenslanders objected to the lateness of Umpire Barlow's decision. "Often," said Mr. Holdsworth, "Gilbert had passed the bowling crease before Barlow called him."93

The Age (Melbourne), published a letter from 'Medico,' who questioned Barlow and "the physical capacity of his eyes for instantaneous judgement."94 The letter went on to suggest that Barlow present himself for an eye examination to "a small capable board of eye specialists."95 It was a view that many would support.

90 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 23 December 1931: 9.
91 The Australian Cricketer, January 1932: 12.
92 The Referee, 23 December 1931: 15.
93 The Sporting Globe, 19 December 1931: 5.
94 The Age (Melbourne), 23 December 1931: 6.
95 ibid.
The general opinion of cricket followers and newspaper critics supported the fairness of Gilbert's deliveries and believed that Barlow had made a 'mistake.' Despite this it could be said that this view in itself did not necessarily prove that Umpire Barlow "was not correct and his critics incorrect." Barlow was seen as "a young umpire who is well thought of by many cricketers." No one was able to doubt the ability or conscientiousness of Barlow and he was generally considered as the "natural successor of Crockett, a well-known umpire." However, he was considered to have "a bee in his bonnet' with regard to no-balling bowlers whose deliveries are the least bit doubtful." For instance, a couple of years before "he no-balled Halcombe, the S.A. and W.A. bowler." Barlow had "a reputation for quick and firm decisions quite apart from his no-balling actions."

Hay, of The Daily Standard (Brisbane), presented his views about Barlow:

Now, Barlow has all the qualities of a first-class umpire; but he is only human. I believe that those deplorable remarks of Mr. Rose engendered in his mind--quite unconsciously--a suspicion about Gilbert's action. Therefore he was very much on his toes when Gilbert took the ball and, subconsciously, had a mental attitude of suspicion.

Therefore he was predisposed to be "not satisfied of the absolute fairness of the delivery" (see law 48). In saying this I am not in any way casting a reflection on Barlow, whose fault, if any was ultra-conscientious."
This "mental attitude of suspicion" about the bowling of Gilbert and his subsequent actions were not altogether unexpected as six weeks after the Bradman incident in Brisbane he had "let it be known" that he intended to no-ball Gilbert.

Under the heading of, 'UMPIRE BARLOW A FEARLESS MAN WHOM NO CROWD CAN RUFFLE,' The Sporting Globe published a story about the man at the centre of the controversy.

Thus, when the discussion of the no-balling of Gilbert threatened even the election issue in popularity, Barlow was found at his home cleaning his motor car. He was totally unaffected by the limelight that his decisions had given him. Cricket was finished, and the job on hand was the washing of his car.

It is interesting to note that several years later in a Sheffield Shield match between Queensland and Victoria Barlow turned down a particularly confident appeal by the Victorians for a catch behind. Barlow said to the batsman at the non-striker's end, Em Toovey, that he "owed Queensland one for what he'd done to a young Queensland bowler years before."

Before the drama in Melbourne Gilbert had previously bowled in Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide and his 1694 deliveries (for 31 wickets) were passed as fair by all umpires. Most significant was the 'passing' of his delivery by Umpire Hele, the regular Test Match umpire in 1930, who was classed as the best umpire in Australia.

The fact that Barlow 'called' Gilbert from the square leg position "was considered unusual and interpreted by some as a reflection on his fellow umpire." On this point The Referee, in support of Barlow, remarked:

\[103 \text{ ibid., 18 December 1931: 6.} \]
\[104 \text{ ibid.} \]
\[105 \text{ The Sporting Globe, 23 December 1931: 9.} \]
\[106 \text{ Em Toovey, personal information, December 1990.} \]
\[107 \text{ The Referee, 23 December 1931: 15.} \]
But umpire Barlow, in calling Gilbert from the square leg position, did nothing unusual. He is there to exercise his judgement. That this differed from that of his colleague would not justify him being passive while holding that the aboriginal's delivery transgressed.\textsuperscript{108}

Barlow did not receive the full support of an influential fellow umpire in the way he would have liked:

R. ("Bob") Crockett, who is recognised throughout the world as an authority and an umpire, thought the deliveries were fair, but he commended Barlow for having the courage of his convictions.

"From over the fence I thought Gilbert's delivery quite fair," he said. "But that is not the point. Barlow was in a better position than me, and if he had the slightest doubt about Gilbert's action he would have failed in his duty if he had not no-balled Gilbert. The umpire who has not the courage of his convictions is not acting in accord with the traditions of the game that has accepted umpires' decisions as final and binding."\textsuperscript{109}

The fact that Barlow continued to no-ball Gilbert in the face of a hostile, and potentially violent, reaction from the crowd could certainly be seen to illustrate his belief at the time that Gilbert 'threw' the ball when he bowled. His actions recalled another no-balling incident in Australian cricket where a player was no-balled 19 times.

The most famous no-balling incident was the calling of Jack Marsh, another aborigine, by Bob Crockett in a Shield match in Sydney. The mercurial Syd. Gregory, the New South Wales captain, put a good one over Bob on that occasion. After a protracted over Marsh was taken off and Syd. put on Tom Howard in his place. Bob promptly called Howard also, and the crowd roared with laughter. Howard was the most notorious "chucker" in Sydney.\textsuperscript{110}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[108] ibid.
\item[109] The Herald (Melbourne), 19 December 1931: 4.
\item[110] ibid.
\end{footnotes}
**ARM THEORY.**

**BARRACKER:** "Why don't you tuck up your other sleeve, Jacky?"

**JACKY:** "No, sir: mine want it that one to keep my fast ball up."

Figure 4.7 'Arm Theory' - a cartoon comment.

---

**Figure 4.8** Hurwood, Hele and Holdsworth - some key figures of the southern tour.
Marsh was to strenuously deny that he threw the ball, "and to demonstrate that he was right on one occasion he had his arm placed in splints and stood in a tub." It was to be a futile exercise and his career in 'big' cricket was ended. In what was probably a distortion (quite untrue) of this story it was written that Gilbert had "bowled hundreds of overs with his arm in splints, to teach himself not to throw the ball."

The Alert (Maryborough) did not miss the obvious when it reported:

The aboriginal bowlers appear to have had bad luck in the matter of being no-balled - first Marsh, then Henry, now Gilbert. Are the spades the only bowlers who throw? Or are they no-balled because they're spades?

Various suggestions of racial prejudice could be made from the fact that a few black fast bowlers were 'called' during their careers. However, these suggestions ignore the fact that there were also a number of white bowlers who were also 'called' over the years. On the basis of this information it is difficult to argue convincingly that Aborigines were singled out for allegations of throwing on the basis of their race alone.

A short article in The Alert, and reproduced from the Labor Call, pointed out that Gilbert was 'down-hearted,' and his future was a 'dark' one.

I'm Gilbert, the Filbert.
I never thought I throw:
But Barlow should surely know
And he says that I do.
Instead of going to Adelaide.
To Queensland I'll go back,
And when I'm there,
I'll tell them there
That Gilbert's declared black.

---

111 ibid.
112 ibid.
113 The Alert (Maryborough), 8 January 1932. ‘Spades’ is a racist term used to refer to the skin colour of Aborigines.
114 ibid.
Despite the problems in Melbourne it was decided to take Gilbert to Adelaide because his action "has been passed previously in all capitals and by such a noted umpire as G. Hele," who would be officiating in Adelaide. The Queensland manager (Holdsworth) indicated that Gilbert would not only be taken to Adelaide but he would be included in the team and "would bowl as usual." naturally, we are not going to allow the opinion of one umpire to bring to a sudden end Gilbert's career in big cricket," he said.

After all the controversy in Melbourne the general view of people was that Gilbert, although he "had remarkably long and flexible arms," did not throw the ball and could reasonably be considered to be fair, or at least should be given the benefit of the doubt. The Daily Mail (Brisbane) indicated that Victorian officials were not prepared to criticise Mr. Barlow but they "are almost unanimous in their belief that Gilbert's deliveries are fair." It was believed that it would not be questioned elsewhere, "unless, perhaps, an umpire in Sydney is influenced by the views of Mr. Rose.

After the Melbourne game, and just when the whole issue seemed to be more or less 'resolved,' The Referee suggested that there was still more to consider about Gilbert's action:

115 The Brisbane Courier, December 1931: 8.
117 ibid.
118 The Herald (Melbourne), 23 December 1931: 1.
119 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 21 December 1931: 14.
120 ibid.
Apart from whether he throws or not, Gilbert could be safely no-balled quite often for his foot action. This has been overlooked by most of the critics in the controversy on the arm delivery.

In the photograph reproduced today, Gilbert is palpably breaking the law. First of all he has his rear foot well off the ground, with his arm just at the commencement of the delivering swing. There is such a pronounced bend in his arm that he looks more like a contortionist than a bowler.\textsuperscript{121}

The photograph published was taken during Queensland Country Week and served to foster doubt in many people's minds. The article concluded by indicating that it would be interesting to know whether it was Gilbert's "foot or arm action which influenced Umpire Barlow in adopting such drastic corrective methods."\textsuperscript{122} As reported earlier Barlow based his opinion on Gilbert's arm action.

Another article on the same page also reviewed the photograph:

The picture of Gilbert's arm is quite extraordinary. It would not, however, be right to accept it as absolute evidence of Gilbert's delivery transgressing the law. The arm looks as though it is double-jointed at the elbow. A slow-motion picture might be much more reliable as indicating his action. However, in the matter of unfair delivery the only evidence worth a rap is that of the umpire's eyesight, provided his knowledge of the game is sound and he realises what the laws of the game expect of him.\textsuperscript{123}

Lambert McBride, who was a relative through marriage to Eddie Gilbert, summed up the views of the people at the Barambah Settlement at the time:

No proof. The films and photographs proved he was bowling and that his bowling was legal - but they thought an Aboriginal couldn't be fast without throwing. Blackfellas' thought he was 'Ant's Pant's' [great].\textsuperscript{124}

\textbf{The Bulletin} contributed to the discussions by printing an article by 'Bumpkin' in which Dr. Hilda Bull, of the Civic Health Department in Melbourne, suggested that "the interesting differences in

\textsuperscript{121} \textit{The Referee}. 30 December 1931: 12.

\textsuperscript{122} ibid.

\textsuperscript{123} ibid.

\textsuperscript{124} Lambert McBride, interview and written information, May 1989.
the anatomical structure of the arm of an abo. and that of a white man might account for the umpire's decision. Another authority, Prof. F. Wood Jones, Professor of Anatomy at Melbourne University, was quoted as confirming the suggestion and pointing out that "Binghi's arm is longer than that of the Caucasian." This observation was the basis for the suggestion that differences in the arms between Europeans and Aborigines "would produce different styles of bowling."

In the next edition of The Bulletin an article by 'Hotham' ridiculed the basis of some of the suggestions outlined:

To begin with, the sooty Queenslander doesn't throw - every umpire who has judged his bowling, save one in Vic., is positive on the point. In any case the question of the question of the length of his arm-bones has nothing to do with the matter. The rule says that the ball must be bowled - "not thrown or jerked." To throw, the elbow or wrist or both must be brought into action so throwing is a matter concerned with joints and not with the actual bones.

The Herald (Melbourne) stated that Gilbert was "looking forward to the match in Adelaide this week perhaps more than any other member of the team." It further stated: "If he be no-balled there, it may be the end of his career in big cricket." Gilbert had the support of his captain, Gough.

126 ibid.
127 The Herald (Melbourne), 22 December 1931: 6.
129 The Herald (Melbourne) 23 December 1931: 1.
130 ibid.
"His action when bowling," added Gough, "is that of a catapult. Every ounce of weight and spring goes into the effort, from the tips of the fingers to his toes.

"He is undoubtedly a match winner, and as fine a fellow as one could wish to meet. If he bowls as fast in Adelaide as he did in Brisbane—then the South Australian batsmen are in for trouble."

In Adelaide, and just prior to the South Australia match, the Queensland manager (Holdsworth) interviewed G. Hele, the Test match umpire, regarding his opinion of the fairness of Gilbert’s delivery. Hele was "recognised by Australian and international authorities alike as the best umpire in Australia." After watching a special trial of Gilbert, Hele said there "was nothing questionable about the delivery." This opinion was to be later supported by his umpiring in the match. Such was the standing of Hele in the game that the acceptance by him of Gilbert’s action was to effectively silence many critics. Despite most commentators being in support of Gilbert there were many players and followers of cricket who would always remain unconvinced that he was always ‘fair.’

Queensland entered the match against South Australia without Bensted, who was injured in Melbourne. In addition, Thurlow had a strained side, and Gilbert was suffering from a chafed toe. South Australia batted first and were to set Queensland a big task when they scored 421 runs. The attendance was larger than usual and many came with a hope of seeing Gilbert bowl. Gilbert was the first bowler, and the crowd was ‘hushed’ as he was given the ball to bowl.

\[131\] ibid.

\[132\] The Age (Melbourne), 26 December 1931: 9.

\[133\] The Referee, 7 February 1935: 15.
The eyes of everyone at the Adelaide Oval on Friday were focussed on Eddie Gilbert, the Queensland aborigine, when he started his run to bowl the first ball in the match between his State and South Australia.

Would the umpires find fault with his delivery, as a Melbourne umpire had done? The ball flashed from Gilbert’s hand towards Richardson’s wicket. Neither umpire spoke. In the opinion of Umpires Hele and Jenkins it was a fair delivery.\(^{134}\)

The *Adelaide Advertiser* described the action during the first over:

Richardson scored two to leg and a single off the aborigine, and Nitschke also got a single. Gilbert was bowling on the leg-side practically the whole of the time, but Richardson relished a short one on the off, and square-cut him for the first four of the match...\(^{135}\)

Later in the innings Gilbert was transferred to the other end. "There also he satisfied the umpires that he did not throw."\(^{136}\)

In reviewing his performance, K.H. Quist, writing in *The Referee*, said:

> From an excellent position, square on with the wicket, assisted with the aid of a powerful binoculars, I can say, without hesitation, that Gilbert did not throw one ball throughout the afternoon. I am informed he was not bowling top pace, but, even so, I cannot tell how this would materially affect his action as he bowls with a perfectly straight arm. Certainly, he does whip his wrist, but so did W.P. Howell, T.R. McKibbin, M.A. Noble, G. Giffen, and many others, and I cannot see how it is possible to do anything with the ball without the whipped wrist.\(^{137}\)

Chiefly responsible for South Australia’s score were Lonergan with 137 runs, Whitfield scored 82, and Richardson made 75. Lonergan played an exceptional innings in attaining his score, while Richardson broke the back of the bowling in playing splendid cricket in his 75. Richardson had found Gilbert’s deliveries to his liking, but "he was deceived by an inswinger from Gilbert, which wrecked the stumps."\(^{138}\) The Queenslanders were considered to have performed fairly

\(^{134}\) *The Sporting Globe*, 30 December 1931: 9.

\(^{135}\) *Adelaide Advertiser*, 26 December, 1931: 7.


\(^{137}\) *The Referee*, 30 December 1930: 12.

well under extremely hot conditions. Bowling for Queensland Oxenham took 3 wickets for 73 and Gilbert secured 3 for 117. The wicket proved to be a batsman's paradise. It was slow and easy, and the fast bowlers were unable to get the ball more than stump high.

The *Truth* (Brisbane) reported on Gilbert's bowling:

Looking at Gilbert's delivery from all points of the compass, one is satisfied that there is nothing in it which could reasonably cause the least doubt in an umpires' mind. His bowling is perfectly fair. He is the fastest bowler at present playing, and although there is room for great improvement in length and direction this weakness in itself has an unsettling effect.¹³⁹

Gilbert's bowling was also commented on by The *Brisbane Courier*:

It was apparent that he was somewhat dubious of his reception for his first three balls were only of medium pace. When none of his deliveries was negatived his pace improved, but all day he was never really dangerous. Obviously to gain the verdict of one of Australia's strongest umpires at the moment—Hele—Gilbert was bowled into the breeze half way through the morning. Hele, like Jenkins, watched his arm and hand action closely, and passed both. Gilbert appeared to be in the same action and pace as he was last season. He was no-balled once, but that was for dragging his foot over the line.

"We were perfectly satisfied in Melbourne as to the genuineness of his action," said Mr. J.H. Holdsworth (manager). "The fact that Umpire Hele has not questioned his delivery all day is good enough for us."¹⁴⁰

Gilbert limped with his chafed toe, "and although he bowled 19 overs with his customary vim he was unable to move with alacrity in the field."¹⁴¹ The umpires, in support of their on-field actions, later stated their opinion that Gilbert's deliveries during the match were fair. This was except for the 'no-ball' called by Hele for Gilbert bowling outside the return crease.

The Queensland batting total was 267, and this proved to be disappointing "with the exception of Sides, who played an unblemished innings for 74",¹⁴² and Oxenham, who played

¹³⁹ *Truth* (Brisbane), 27 December 1931: 5.

¹⁴⁰ *The Brisbane Courier*, 28 December 1931: 5.


¹⁴² *The Referee*, 30 December 1931: 12.
well for 82. Sides’ innings, according to the opinion of good judges, was one "of the best ever seen on the Oval" and he "tackled Grimmett as though the googly bowler were a novice." Gilbert made 7 runs.

Gilbert was given a great ovation on going out to bat, the sympathy of the crowd being with him. The applause was redoubled when he hit Whitfield for four, and then off-drove him....Richardson, however, dismissed him with a footballer’s catch at mid-off off Lee’s first ball to him.

Lee, for South Australia "bowled splendidly, keeping a perfect length and flighting them well," and achieved the bowling figures of 4 for 39, off 12.2 overs, with 2 maidens.

Richardson proved to be a dominant force again in South Australia’s second innings of 7 declared for 335. His innings of 138 proved to be a "delightful display, in which he always went for the ball." He was "very comfortable facing Gilbert, who obliged by keeping them on the leg stump." Thurlow, despite his injury, bowled with great ‘heart’ and took 3 wickets for 141 while Hurwood and Cook took 2 wickets each. Hurwood’s 2 wickets cost 50 runs and Cook’s cost 25 runs. Gilbert finished the innings with 0 wicket for 44. He was injured during the morning, as the Adelaide Advertiser was to point out:

Gilbert, who had bowled only one over before lunch, was the bowler after lunch. He had asked to be taken off after his over in the morning, as a stiff side made it difficult for him to bowl. That he was feeling little better was demonstrated after lunch, for he bowled at a comparatively slow pace, and the batsmen had little difficulty in scoring off him.

---

143 ibid.

144 The Brisbane Courier, 28 December 1931: 5.

145 ibid., 6.

146 ibid.

147 ibid.

148 ibid.

149 Adelaide Advertiser, 26 December 1931: 7.
South Australia set Queensland the tremendous task of having to score 490 runs to win but they were all out for 209. South Australia won by 280 runs. Hogg, with "splendid placing on both sides of the wicket,"™ reached 71 before he was out, and Cook was next best with 32. Gough was unable to be involved after being "palpably weak and distressed and weak through his attack of influenza."™ Gilbert scored a ‘duck.’ Lee finished a fine game with 5 for 70, off 20 overs. Grimmett had much improved figures in the second innings and took 4 for 70.

---

**GILBERT UNCHALLENGED**

**Watched Silently by Hele**

**S.A. MASTERS QUEENSLAND BOWLING**

**Three Century Partnerships in Big Score**

---

Figure 4.9 Newspaper headline from Queensland versus South Australia match 1931.

---

150 The Brisbane Courier, 28 December, 1931: 5.

151 ibid.
CHAPTER V

DOWN AND ALMOST OUT

Before going into the next match against New South Wales there was some concern about the injury problems in the Queensland team and the participation of Gilbert. Bensted was thought to have recovered enough to take his place in the team but it was suggested that the Queensland team could be weakened by the absence of Gilbert, who had suffered a chafed toe and shoulder strain in Adelaide.¹ There was some indication that a replacement player might be sent for him. Because of the no-balling incident in Melbourne there was great interest in Gilbert’s appearance in Sydney. When he had last bowled in Sydney his delivery went unquestioned, with umpires Farrow and Armstrong officiating. Despite the judgment of Umpire Hele in Adelaide there was some speculation about whether he would be objected to on this occasion. In echoing this uncertainty The Telegraph (Brisbane) went as far as to headline: ‘Eddie Gilbert dropped.’²

Neither Bensted nor Gilbert ended up playing in the match and they left Sydney by the Sydney Mail train amid great secrecy the day before the match. Apparently the local cricket officials did not want the public to learn that Gilbert, who was to have been “the greatest individual attraction in the match,”³ would not be playing, “as it was thought this would adversely affect the gate receipts.”⁴

¹ The Sporting Globe, 30 December 1931: 9.
² The Telegraph (Brisbane), 1 January 1932: 7.
³ The Sporting Globe, 30 December 1931: 9.
Figure 5.1 Eddie Gilbert with Mrs. Doris Crawford (Headmaster’s wife) and Mrs. Pat Bourke (Dormitory matron).
After their arrival in Brisbane, and obviously acting under instructions, neither Bensted nor Gilbert would make any comment on the eventful happenings in Melbourne, nor would they "discuss any phase of the tour." Both were to state that they "were not suffering greatly from the effects of their injuries." Gamble was sent to Sydney as a replacement player for the Shield team.

Even before Eddie Gilbert had arrived back at the settlement a rumour was widely circulating that he had been excluded from the Queensland team to play New South Wales because he was likely to be no-balled, and "not on account of health reasons." Back at his home he was forced to deny that this was the case.

Gilbert said that he knew he was not in proper condition to play, and the imputation that he was omitted for other reasons was grossly unfair to the touring selection committee. The trouble developed with a cold caught during the Melbourne match, and the terrific heat at Adelaide, no doubt aggravated the complaint, with the result that every time he bowled or even coughed he experienced severe pains in the left side. Gilbert is under treatment at the settlement hospital by Dr. P.M. Davidson, Government medical officer, who when interviewed to-night, said that there was not the slightest doubt that Gilbert was suffering from strained muscles in the left side, and he was being treated accordingly. Gilbert said Grimmett had remarked to him, "Your delivery is as fair as my own."

---

5 The Brisbane Courier, 2 January 1932: 6.
6 ibid.
8 ibid.
Figure 5.2 Cottages at Barambah (Cherbourg) settlement - 1930s.
Winda played Barambah on January the 10th 1932 and Eddie Gilbert took 6 wickets for 20 runs off 12 overs and made 67 (retired) with the bat. Winda made 134 and Barambah compiled 183. The Barambah team for this game was R. Campbell, J. Daylight, S. Albert, E. Gilbert, T. Bone, T. Bligh, F. Fisher, A. Cobbo, W. Bone, F. Cobbo and M. Douglas.

A member of the Winda team, Fred Kratzmann, recalled playing against Gilbert in one such match:

I played against Eddie...he pitched one up reasonably outside the off-stump and I played for it...didn’t have any back-lift or anything and I hit the ball and it went for four. The next ball he bowled to me I didn’t see it. I remember it touched the top of my cap. Then he bowled another ball that was outside the off-stump and about four foot high and I was going to square cut it and I got the bat...and it cut off the bottom corner and shot through slips -- that mark was on my bat for about three years. He didn’t swing the ball much. If you played with a really straight bat you had a chance -- if you wanted to stand up to him. If you stepped back -- some of them moved back and left their bat hanging out you’d get caught somewhere in slips...you might have been a bit lucky and got the ball through slips for a four or something -- but he was fast. They [other players] were scared of him for sure. It is only natural.12

Less than a month later, in early February 1932, the final round of fixtures for the cricket premiership in the Murgon Association was completed. Barambah were declared the winners with 32 points, while Winda was a close second, with 30 points.13

Speculation surrounded the likely selection of Gilbert in the State team to play in the forthcoming game against Victoria. Superintendent Semple wired the Q.C.A. to inform them that "GILBERT WAS PHYSICALLY FIT; WILL ARRIVE IN BRISBANE ON TUESDAY MORNING; MEDICAL CERTIFICATE POSTED."14 This news meant that Gilbert would have three days at the practice nets to get into form. In spite of the medical clearance there was

---

12 Fred Kratzmann, personal interview, April 1992.
13 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 8 February 1932: 5.
14 The Brisbane Courier, 25 January 1932: 5.
an impression that "his no-ball in Melbourne, and his failure to get wickets on the recent tour, have taken some of the keenness out of the Barambah boy."\[^{15}\]

In the match against Victoria, the Queensland team, after being 2 wickets down for 5, went on and compiled 504 runs, their best total of the season. It was Gilbert who tried for the run to bring up the 500 and, "Eddie got on to it in some lucky or mysterious fashion and ran for his life as a spectator called 'Coo-ee.'\[^{16}\]

The main feature of Queensland's innings was the splendid 162 by Oxenham, the highest score by a Queenslander against Victoria. Andrews, in his first appearance for Queensland, also scored a great century. Victoria's attack was not particularly dangerous, with a'Beckett taking 4 for 105, looking the "most likely to get wickets."\[^{17}\] The Victorian fielding proved to be excellent and helped save many runs.

The Victorians compiled 277 in their turn at bat. O'Brien and Thomas, both young left-handers, opened for Victoria.

Gilbert was given the honour of leading the attack. Apart from a man at mid-on and another at fine leg, the field was packed on the off-side. The aboriginal sent them down fast, and made a few bump disconcertingly. The last ball of that over proved disastrous for O'Brien, who snicked it into Waterman's hands behind the wickets.\[^{18}\]

The dismissal actually occurred on Gilbert's tenth ball as he bowled a wide and the umpire gave him an extra ball by error.\[^{19}\]

---

\[^{15}\] The Sporting Globe, 27 January 1932: 16.

\[^{16}\] Truth (Brisbane), 31 January 1932: 5.

\[^{17}\] The Referee, 3 February 1932: 16.

\[^{18}\] The Brisbane Courier, 1 February 1932: 7.

\[^{19}\] The Australian Cricketer, March-April 1932: 5.
Darling played a fine innings for his 48 while the Victorian tail featured a fighting 60 from Ben Barnett. In the bowling department for Queensland the honours were shared with Gilbert (2 for 77), Gamble (2 for 83), Bensted (3 for 70), Oxenham (2 for 23), and Cook (1 for 15). In the absence of Thurlow and Hurwood the Queensland attack was not as particularly effective as it had been. Gilbert's pace proved to be nothing like it was in the early games of the season and a good number of his balls were short, "and batsmen had little trouble in getting them away."²⁰ As well as the already mentioned wicket of O'Brien, Gilbert bowled Smith after this batsmen had "waved his bat wildly at several of Gilbert's deliveries."²¹

Although Queensland had a lead of 227 runs the follow-on was not enforced and in their second innings Queensland scored 216 for 6 wickets, declared. Top-scorer Sides made 56, not out, in a very safe innings in which he "refused to be tempted into wild hitting."²² Nagel was Victoria's best bowler and was unlucky not to do better than his 2 for 30.

Victoria faced a total of 443 to win the match but were all out for 304 runs, 139 runs behind Queensland. Gilbert's first two overs were inclined to be erratic, but in his third over "the first ball came off the pitch at tremendous pace, hitting the top of O'Brien's stumps."²³ He followed up this success by having Darling caught off the last ball of the over "when he skied a ball which came up sharply."²⁴ He bowled with tremendous pace to 'bag' 5 wickets (all of his victims were bowled) for 67 runs. At one stage he had 3 for 26, off 8 overs. Eddie Gilbert produced a match-winning effort and 'broke the back' of the Victorian team in taking the wickets

²⁰ The Referee, 3 February 1932: 16.
²¹ The Herald (Melbourne), 1 February 1932: 3.
²² The Referee, 3 February 1932: 16.
²³ The Brisbane Courier, 3 February 1932: 5.
²⁴ The Herald (Melbourne), 2 February 1932: 7.
of O'Brien, Darling, Ryder, Nagel, and Smith. Next best bowling performance was Gamble with 2 for 49. In the batting department for Victoria Oakley made 88 in 211 minutes, including six fours. He gave one chance, when he snicked Gilbert to Waterman when he was on 74, but "the 'keeper juggled the ball, and then dropped it, to the chagrin of the crowd." Ryder made a fairly sound 71 but was never really comfortable, "and eventually he saw his bails sent flying by the aboriginal."26

Under the heading of, ‘GILBERT’S TRIUMPH,’ The Brisbane Courier was to report:

It was Gilbert’s great bowling which enabled Queensland to force a victory. In many cases the batsmen were only making their strokes when the ball had passed the wicket, and was, almost in the gloves of the stumper, so great was his pace.27

The Queensland win was seen as reflecting the excellent all-round work of the players.

During the match ‘Spectator,’ of The Daily Mail (Brisbane), was to question the generally accepted way of bowling Gilbert in short spells.

Yesterday, Gilbert opened with the new ball, secured two wickets in four overs, and was promptly taken off. Between 11.30 a.m. and 3 p.m. Gilbert bowled only eight overs. Why? Surely he could bowl as long when successful as when unsuccessful.28

The same article went on to offer some advice:

Gilbert would be well advised to practice securing length and direction. If he were to practice assiduously with this aim in view we would find him playing for Australia against England next season.29

---

26 ibid.
27 ibid.
28 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 3 February 1932: 14.
29 ibid.
In some support of this opinion the *Sports Referee* (Brisbane) was to state that "Eddie Gilbert has every claim to being classed as the best shock bowler in Australia," although the writer did go on to suggest that he had been "gaining good averages only against second-class teams."

Another viewpoint on the question of the suitability of Gilbert as an Australian Test player was made in the *Week* (Brisbane):

> "It is absurd to think that the Australian selectors would for one moment consider that Gilbert has any real claim for inclusion in the Australian eleven," said Mr. Clem Hill, the noted former Test Match player and manager of the South Australian Sheffield team, when asked for his opinion of Gilbert...

> "Most of the time Gilbert bowled not much more than fast medium," Clem Hill said.

A ‘Letter to the Editor,’ to *The Brisbane Courier*, and under the heading of, ‘GILBERT'S VALUE,’ said, in part:

> Recently we have had much adverse criticism of Eddie Gilbert, Queensland’s coloured bowler. This criticism in my opinion, is entirely unwarranted. Do these critics realise the value of a shock bowler who has repeatedly taken the wickets of opening batsmen in the early stages of a match...One shudders to think what would have happened to Queensland this year if Gilbert had not been in the team...

> *HARRY BRUCE. M.L.A.*

In the two matches already played by Queensland, against New South Wales and Victoria, these teams were missing their Test players. The next match was played against a full strength South Australian team at the Brisbane Cricket Grounds between March 12th and 16th. It was to result in South Australia winning outright by 150 runs.

---

30 *Sports Referee* (Brisbane), 6 February 1932: 11.

31 *ibid*.

32 *Week* (Brisbane), 8 February 1932: 25.

33 *The Brisbane Courier*, 3 February 1932: 5.
South Australia made 410 runs after going in on a perfect batting wicket.

Gilbert sent down the first over from the northern end, and runs came from the second ball, a short-paced one, that Richardson hooked for two. A bye gave Nitschke the strike, and when Gilbert was delivering the second ball to the left-hander he lost his footing and spread-eagled on to the pitch. The fall appeared to upset him, for he bowled erratically for the remainder of the over, and Richardson collected the first boundary with a nice pull.\(^4^\)

Richardson played a most entertaining innings of 121 while Lonergan, in his innings of 95, demonstrated that "he is a batsman of high class."\(^3^5\) Catchlove played "a number of streaky shots"\(^3^6\) in his good score of 103, not out. On a wicket that gave the bowlers no assistance Gilbert emerged with the best figures of 4 for 98, off 22 overs but he did not bowl exceptionally well except for a brief time, and he appeared to "lack the pace he had early in the season.\(^3^7\)

Thurlow took 4 for 106 and "like Gilbert he was inclined to be erratic."\(^3^8\)

Gilbert was badly shod on the day, and this may have accounted for his inconsistent form. He left the field three times to have his boots attended to, and appeared to take little interest in his bowling until he rattled Jamieson's sticks.\(^3^9\)

On the whole the Queensland fielding was as good as any seen from any one of the State's teams in recent years. Even so Gilbert dropped Catchlove in the slips during the early part of that player's innings. It was a catch that a smarter slip fieldsman might have caught and it was suggested that Hogg, the captain, would "be doing Queensland a service if he experimented with a new second slip."\(^4^0\)

---

\(^3^4\) Sports Referee (Brisbane), 12 March 1932: 1.

\(^3^5\) The Brisbane Courier, 14 March 1932: 6.

\(^3^6\) ibid.

\(^3^7\) ibid.

\(^3^8\) ibid.

\(^3^9\) The Referee, 16 March 1932: 22.

\(^4^0\) The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 14 March 1932: 6.
Queensland put on a consistent team display of batting to score 420 runs. Bensted, with attractive batting, went past a century for the first time, and finally reached 145. Mossop scored 59 runs during a century partnership with Bensted. Best bowling figures for South Australia were 3 for 104 by Lee and 3 for 114 by Grimmett.

With batting conditions still good South Australia scored 289 in their second innings. Top-scorer was Lonergan, who made 97 before being run out. Three batsmen were run out as the batsmen scored quickly. Gilbert captured 2 wickets for 68, Bensted 2 for 44, and Hubbard 2 for 48.

It was then the turn of the Queensland team to bat and although there were expectations of a good finish the Queensland batsmen came and went and the team was all out "for the very modest total of 129." The batsmen had batted "without life or purpose." Oxenham provided the bulk of the runs with 57. Gilbert scored 5, not out. Grimmett and Carlton were in a very 'destructive' mood. In a match-winning effort, Grimmett, the 'googly' bowler, took 5 wickets for 44, off 17.1 overs, including 5 maidens.

South Australia had fought "doggedly out of an apparently hopeless position" to record a convincing win with an hour to spare. It was the last match of the Sheffield Shield season, a season which was one of 'ups and downs' for the Queensland team. New South Wales won the Shield and Queensland, although scoring the same number of points as Victoria, finished last on averages. In spite of this the team proved to be a good all-round combination. Queensland's best player of the season was Oxenham, who scored 431 runs and took 28 wickets (average 22.32). Gilbert's speed was proved to be of value 'at times' and he took 26 wickets for 644 runs at an

---

41 The Brisbane Courier, 17 March 1932: 5.
42 ibid.
43 ibid., 17 March 1932: 5.
average of 24.76. After the match Arthur Mailey, a respected former cricketer and cricket writer, wrote a provocative article about Gilbert’s prospects of making the Australian team. He supported the ability of Gilbert when he said:

Sometime I am inclined to think that Eddie Gilbert, who is probably the fastest three-over bowler in the world, has had an effect on Australian fast bowlers. This dusky lad brings with him a whiff of the past, when men with sheer pace alone obtained wickets. He does not require an 18 or 20 yards run or a finely-placed leg field, or off field. He just takes four or five yards run and the ball leaves his hand like a shot out of a gun.

All our fast bowlers have a better physique than Gilbert, yet this little quiet modest product of the Barambah[h] mission camp comes out and shows them what fast bowling really is. And if he continues to do so he must be regarded as a candidate for the Australian eleven next season.

In early March 1932, and while playing for the Barambah aboriginal settlement against a Maroochy district team, Eddie Gilbert took 7 wickets for 35 runs, off 15 overs, in a fine display of ‘whirlwind bowling.’ It was always interesting to read the various descriptions of Gilbert’s bowling and in a comment on his action the Nambour Chronicle wrote:

Gilbert’s approach to the wicket comprised a short, quick run, then like a flash his right arm came over, his head bent to one side and the ball sped on its path of trickery.

Gilbert commanded the utmost respect of all Maroochy batsmen as they compiled 189 runs. Adams was top-score with 79 before Gilbert “shattered his wicket with a beautiful ball.” Before Adams had opened his score, Gilbert shook the leg stump, but the bails failed to fall. Barambah replied with a paltry 42, the top-scorer being Gilbert with 16. Lane, who took 5 for

---

44 The Australian Cricketer, May 1932: 18.
45 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 17 March 1932: 8.
46 Nambour Chronicle, 11 March 1932: 12.
47 Maryborough Chronicle, 7 March 1932: 7.
15, and Adams, with 3 for 7, were the cause of the downfall. Maroochy failed in the second knock, the innings being declared at 8 for 68. Gilbert took 2 wickets and Albert took 3 wickets for 9. The Barambah team gave a sound display in the second attempt, and when stumps were drawn had lost 5 for 108. Campbell made 38 and Albert scored 26. Cameron was the best bowler for Maroochy with 2 for 20. The game was drawn but had included many spectacular incidents.

A large crowd was present for the game and Gilbert was the centre of attraction. He only bowled a couple of express deliveries but had 7 catches dropped off his bowling. The visitors were treated to a luncheon at the Royal Hotel. Gilbert returned to Brisbane on Sunday evening in the company of Mr. Len Allen.

Later in the month Gilbert played in a representative match for Murgon and Wondai District against Gympie. Murgon and Wondai District won by 31 runs in the first innings after Gympie batted first and made 130. Cheales was top-scorer with 33. Gilbert proved to be the hero of the day when he created havoc by securing 6 wickets for 36 and then scoring 23 runs with the bat in his team’s innings. In the Murgon and Wondai District total of 161 runs Bone was the main contributor with 43 runs. Gympie made 227 for the loss of 7 wickets in their second innings. Robinson made 59 runs and Gilbert captured 2 wickets at a cost of 29.

Figure 5.3 Advertisement for cricket match at Ipswich.

---

48 Noosa Advocate and Cooroora Advertiser, 9 March 1932: 5.

In early April, Gilbert played a game at Ipswich. The Queensland Times reported:

A strong Queensland cricket eleven met defeat at the hands of an Ipswich team by the narrow margin of six runs on the first innings at the show ground on Saturday. The Sheffield Shield batsmen seemed all at sea against the deliveries of Watson, Routledge, Harris, and Bizzell on a soft wicket; while Biggs, the local captain, carried Ipswich to victory by a splendid innings of 62. His was undoubtedly the star performance for the day.

Eddie Gilbert, the Queensland aboriginal bowler, was the centre of attraction; but the pitch was not to his liking, and he managed to obtain only one wicket. The Ipswich victory was a fitting termination to a very successful season. Well over 400 persons attended the game.  

The Q.C.A. had sent the strongest available Queensland team under captain Holdsworth. Batting first the Q.C.A. compiled only 102 runs. Holdsworth made 31 and Brew 22. Gilbert received a great cheer when he went to bat but he had trouble with the first two balls he faced and was bowled by Harris on the third. Watson (3 for 27) and Bizzell (2 for 1) were the best bowlers for Ipswich. Ipswich made a total of 108 in their ‘dig.’ Biggs, whose innings comprised "perfectly-executed round the wicket shots, interspersed with his powerful drives," scored 62.

The best bowler for the Q.C.A. team was Oxenham, with 4 for 35. Gilbert, after being given a great reception when he took the new ball, ended up with one wicket for 15. This wicket was taken towards the end of the Ipswich innings.

"Put Gilbert on" came the cry from the crowd, and the visiting skipper was quick to oblige. Holdsworth tossed the ball to the Aboriginal, who captured his only wicket with a good one which just removed Greinke’s balls and the innings ended with Ipswich six runs ahead.  

Q.C.A. made 108 for 6 declared in their second innings. Gilbert was left, not out, for no score. Bensted gave a bright display to make 50. Harris was the chief wicket-taker for Ipswich with 3

---

50 The Queensland Times, 4 April 1932: 9.

51 ibid.

52 ibid.
for 19. Ipswich in the second innings were 4 for 63 at the close of play. Biggs made the highest score of 19. Oxenham backed up a good first innings performance with another 3 wickets (for 32) in this innings. Gilbert had no wicket for 3, off 2 overs. Ipswich were winners of a memorable match for them.

During the Easter of 1932, Gilbert was invited to play at Stanthorpe with a Brisbane Colts' team. This team was under the management of Mr. L. Mossop, and played against local teams. Gilbert, as usual, was to prove to be a favourite with the spectators.

The first game was against the Stanthorpe Cricket Association team. Stanthorpe batted first and made 269 runs. Maddern top-scored with 124. According to 'Long On,' of the Stanthorpe Border Post, "His standing up to Eddie Gilbert will rank in my estimation as one of the finest innings I have ever seen him play." For the visiting team Young took 4 wickets for 49. Gilbert bowled fast and tried hard to finish with the figures of 2 for 42. In reply to Stanthorpe's total the Brisbane Colts were all out for 241. D. Mossop made 47, Sobey 46, and A. Mossop made 45. Second last man in Gilbert gave the crowd a surprise with his magnificent leg hitting and was 29, not out, at the end of the game. Best bowlers for Stanthorpe were Macking with 5 for 49 and Francis with 3 for 34. The Stanthorpe Border Post was to report: "Stanthorpe has fought and won many sterling cricket battles, but they never appeared to better advantage than against...the Brisbane Colts' team."

A 'holiday' match was played after lunch on Sunday at Glen Alpin. This match ended in a draw after a Stanthorpe team made 158. Schatt 54 (retired) and Bonner 41 were the main scorers. Young was the best of the visiting bowlers with 5 for 32. Gilbert did not bowl but

---

53 Stanthorpe Border Post, 1 April 1932. A few players made a reputation for themselves on their supposed ability to 'handle' Gilbert.

54 ibid.
opened the batting for Brisbane Colts. He was out for 5. Hansen made 45 (retired). Waterson had the highest wicket tally for Stanthorpe with 2 for 33. Brisbane Colts were 8 wickets down for 150 at the end of play.\textsuperscript{55}

In yet another match Gilbert visited Bundaberg with a team from Barambah. The newspaper reports at the time give an interesting insight into many attitudes and views of the white people. The \textit{Bundaberg Daily News and Mail} was to report:

\begin{quote}
The visit of Eddie Gilbert and the Barambah aboriginal team created considerable interest in Bundaberg over the week-end, and the match at East Bundaberg was well attended on Saturday and Sunday.

The main attraction was the presence of Eddie Gilbert, the world’s fastest bowler, who although not at his top demonstrated what the batsmen have to face on the turf. Spectators marvelled at the pace the diminutive dusky figure was able to develop and the short run he takes. His short stops were standing on the edge of the boundary. Eddie is a fine unobtrusive young chap, and the wish was expressed that he would find his way into the test teams. He was besieged during his stay by autograph hunters.\textsuperscript{56}

The team stayed at the National Hotel and toured the local area during their time at Bundaberg. Later in the morning they were welcomed by the Mayor (Ald. B. McLean) and representative citizens at the City Council Chambers in the presence of a large gathering. The Mayor said he was glad to have the opportunity of extending a welcome to the Barambah aboriginal cricketers, who were highly popular in the district. Outwardly they may be dark, but inwardly they were white men. They were good sports and knew how to play the game both on and off the field. He wished them a pleasant stay in Bundaberg. The Mayor was also pleased to be able to include Eddie Gilbert in the welcome. Eddie Gilbert was not only known in the district, but throughout the world, which honour he had won for Barambah and Queensland on the cricket fields of Australia. (Applause)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{ibid}. After the game the visitors were entertained at a dinner at Landy’s Hotel and each player was presented with a fine tray of apples. Mr. Mossop, the manager of the visiting team, was also given a tray of grapes after a tour of orchards in The Summit area.

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Bundaberg Daily News and Mail}, 11 April 1932: 3.
Mr. W. O'Shea (president of the Bundaberg Cricket Association), also welcomed the visitors and reinforced the comments previously made and stated that he "felt sure that they would live up to their reputation for which they were noted."\textsuperscript{57} Responses to the welcome were made by Robert Crawford, Jack Daylight senr. (the team captain), and Eddie Gilbert.\textsuperscript{58}

The Bundaberg Daily Times reported the responses of Robert Crawford and Eddie Gilbert:

Despite their colour, they were true Australians, and lived up to the high standard of principles set down by their white brothers. Eddie Gilbert, more popularly known as "Our Eddie," said Mr. Crawford, had performed so well amongst the Australian cricketers that he had undoubtedly earned his place in the test team. The fight for his inclusion had waged now for two years, but success was never, and the fight would be continued as hard as ever. The barriers would be broken down and he would gain the reward of his ability.

Eddie Gilbert also spoke a few words thanking the citizens for the warm welcome. With his characteristically happy smile, he told the meeting he was shy, and sat down amidst loud applause.\textsuperscript{59}

The first ball of the official start of the match was delivered by the Mayor to Gilbert, who 'dispatched the leather' to the boundary. The Bundaberg team then batted first and were all out for 52. At one stage of the game 5 wickets were down for 5. Scotton top-scored with 18. Gilbert took 4 for 1, and Daylight 4 for 23. Barambah made 173 runs in reply. Campbell made 39 and Gilbert was next best with 33. Bundaberg then made 159 in their second innings. Groszmann made 45. There were 33 sundries registered, mainly due to Gilbert, "who was sending them down at a high rates of speed, and several of them flew over the boundary."\textsuperscript{60} Gilbert took 4 for 26 and after taking three early wickets for only 1 run, "he was taken off, but the spectators wanted to see him in action again, and the captain brought Eddie back to the crease

\textsuperscript{57} ibid.

\textsuperscript{58} ibid.

\textsuperscript{59} Bundaberg Daily Times, 11 April 1932: 3.

\textsuperscript{60} Bundaberg Daily News and Mail, 11 April 1932: 3.
for the last over." Fisher took 3 wickets for 34. At the end of the game Barambah were 4 for 23 in their second innings.

The visitors have an excellent all round team, one that would hold their own with many first grade teams. They were neat and clever in the field and they gave a good account of themselves under the able captaincy of J. Daylight senr., who himself is a real good all round sport.\(^1\)

In the afternoon the visitors gave a display with boomerangs and spears.

Around this time the Murgon team played a match against a visiting Q.C.A. organised team from Brisbane. Doug Goodchild, a Murgon resident, remembered the contest between Gilbert and Archie Jackson, the Australian player:

> I saw him [Gilbert] play lots and lots of times. One of the greatest contests I ever seen in cricket was Archie Jackson and Gilbert on this showground here. Jackson came up with a team and Eddie was in the local team and a great contest took place between them. Eddie almost bowled him twice, then Jackson got on top of him in the finish. He made a magnificent hundred...and didn’t live long after that.\(^2\)

Fred Kratzmann played in the match for the Murgon team and remembered that "Eddie had been instructed not to bowl flat out against him [Jackson] on concrete...because Jackson was a sick man."\(^3\)

Archie Jackson was a brilliant young cricketer who died perhaps before his true greatness was reached. Settlement inmate, Vince Bunda, played against Archie Jackson in this match and remembered: "I remember I pelted one down at Archie Jackson -- he just hit it as you like.

---

\(^1\) ibid.

\(^2\) ibid.

\(^3\) Doug Goodchild, personal interview, April 1990. Every Easter time from about 1930 to 1936 Mr. Holdsworth would bring a team up from Brisbane. Gilbert would play if he was available.

\(^4\) Fred Kratzmann, *op.cit.* Kratzmann thought that Jackson was the best batsmen that he ever bowled against and "can still see him guiding the ball down through the slips and gully."
There, in my opinion, was the greatest batsmen we ever had."\(^{55}\)

Several months after the game Jackson was to express his "high opinion of Gilbert’s ability as a bowler and of his modest personality."\(^{66}\)

Eddie Gilbert, for some time, has been the most-discussed bowler in Australia, not only because of his pace, but because of the inability of critics to decide whether he throws or bowls.

Having batted against him on three occasions, I have no hesitation in declaring his delivery fair and above suspicion.

While in Adelaide recently I asked G. Hele, the test umpire, his opinion on this controversy. Hele contended that Gilbert did not throw, and, after all he should know. The trouble is that some umpires crave publicity, and to any with those inclinations Gilbert is indeed a gift.

It is hoped that Gilbert’s progress will not be retarded, and that his destiny will be fulfilled of being one of the greatest bowlers and draw-cards the game has known.

**ORNAMENT TO THE GAME.**

Contrary to general expectations the adulation he has received has not affected his mental equilibrium. Such a player is an ornament to the game: may he continue to prosper!\(^{67}\)

During a match in 1932 a local cricketer in the South Burnett, Stan Lord, was struck a blow on his ‘box’ by a delivery from Gilbert. This item suffered a large dent and was kept with a note attached:

*The box was used by Stan Lord in a cricket match played in 1932 in Kingaroy between the Taabinga and Murgon District teams. The match was played on a rough concrete cricket pitch covered with Kippax matting.*

*Stan Lord was opening bat for Taabinga and Eddie Gilbert, the Queensland Aboriginal fast bowler was opening bowler for Murgon.*

\(^{65}\) Vince Bunda, personal interview, tape in possession of Dr. Ray Evans, University of Queensland.

\(^{66}\) *The Daily Mail* (Brisbane), 20 October 1932: 6.

\(^{67}\) *ibid.*
The dent in the box was made by a ball bowled by Gilbert in his opening over, and, if nothing else proves, the batsman got behind the flight of the ball, which did not rise above the height of the bails.

Murgon won the match by 2 runs on the first innings, 77 to 75, and Lord made 21 on the first innings and 24 in the 2nd.

Gilbert rarely ever bowled a bouncer, but if he did it would reach the average country ground boundary on the first bounce.

Except for a box and small batting gloves the batsman did not wear any protection such as helmet or body padding of any kind.  

Although the inclusion of Gilbert in the State team was of great pride to inmates at the settlement the substantial financial sacrifices were evident. A letter to the Chief Protector of Aboriginals from Superintendent Semple in April 1932, outlines some concerns:

Your memo, of the 16th. inst with reference to compensation allowed to Gilbert by the Cricket Assoc. Gilbert received his ordinary ration such as flour, tea, sugar, meat etc. While he was away his wife received her ration. Of course Gilbert lost his wages when away.

At the beginning of the season an account was paid to Messrs Allan Stark for £16 [pounds] odd representing outlay in clothing also £2 odd for boots.

This was paid by the Concert Party. No other expenditure was made.

W. Porteus Semple (Signature).
Superintendent.  

---

68 Stan Lord’s protector, in possession of Professor Max Howell, University of Queensland.

69 Eddie Gilbert, personal file, Department of Community Services, 1988. Letter 03049, 10 April 1932. £1 has the same value as $2.
Eddie Gilbert, the Queensland fast bowler, is fond of animals as well as cricket. Here he is seen at the Barambah Aboriginal Settlement with his favourite dog.

Figure 5.4 Eddie Gilbert and his favourite dog.

Figure 5.5 Barambah cricket team with settlement officials.
Another note from Semple, dated the 11th of May, 1932, was addressed to Mr. O’Leary:

Do other cricketers receive any allowance for special cricket requirements; boots, uniform, caps, blazers +c [sic] made necessary preseqs. [sic] through inclusion in representative teams.\(^7^0\)

Gilbert had all his rail fares and medical expenses reimbursed by the Q.C.A. It was suggested that Gilbert was "not like other lads and cannot get clothing as Europeans."\(^7^1\) His ordinary clothing was provided by the Department but it was reported that he purchased a suit out of his own money at a cost of £1/10/-.

During September Gilbert was paid 1 guinea [one pound and one shilling] through the Q.C.A., for his expenses in playing a match earlier in the year. Around this time the Q.C.A. also paid £7/11/4 [7 pounds 11 shillings and 4 pence] to Gilbert as money owing to him for gear and travelling expenses.

In the latter part of the year ‘Gloom,’ of The Bulletin, tried to be ‘funny’ when it offered its suggestions for the Australian team to play the visiting Englishmen:

There is not a fast bowler in sight who looks really dangerous save the Queensland abo, Gilbert. Since he holds no substantive royal rank, as do some of the members of the visiting side, he can hardly be considered as eligible to represent his native land, though doubtless he is a descendant of kings.\(^7^2\)

\(^7^0\) ibid., memo, dated 11 May, 1932.

\(^7^1\) ibid.

\(^7^2\) The Bulletin, 19 October 1932: 32.
In October 1932, The Sporting Globe previewed the upcoming Country Week:

Gilbert has been doing remarkable things for his club, an indication that he will be a more serviceable player this season than he has been. His success with the bat has been most marked, so perhaps he will become more than a "rabbit" in the State team.

Good judges declare that Gilbert, properly nursed, is the most serviceable fast bowler in Australia, and that his color [sic] should not keep him out of the tests if he continues his successes. They point out that Harold Larwood, who is much sturdier, is given a limited number of successive overs. It will be interesting to see what the Englishmen do when they meet this frail but remarkable aboriginal bowler for the first time.73

Gilbert was reported as being 'heavier' than he was during the previous season and in much better physical condition. He had apparently "been doing hard work during the winter."74

In some of the early season games in the Murgon and District Association Gilbert performed well. In the opening match of the season against Murgon he scored 106, not out, and took 6 for 3, including a hat-trick. Stanley Alberts, another member of the team, scored 107 in the same match.75 Playing in the second game of the season for his Barambah club Gilbert had the match bowling figures of 9 for 36.76

To attend the Country Week carnival Gilbert, as a settlement Aborigine, received special permission to travel in a private car being driven by a local player (Mr. G. Bourne) who was also involved in the Carnival. During what were fairly regular visits to Brisbane Gilbert was to pay "frequent visits to a family of half-castes,"77 the Malazer family. These visits were reported to have helped his 'attitude' a great deal.

73 The Sporting Globe, 12 October 1932: 11.
74 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 15 October 1932: 14.
76 The Australian Cricketer, 1 November 1932: 12.
77 Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op. cit., 1932.
Eddie Gilbert played in three games during Country Week. He was instructed by the State selectors not to bowl at full pace and duly followed this direction. The first match of the Country Week trials was a match between South and Central Queensland, which the former won by 47 runs on the first innings. South batted first and made 219. Madge was accurate and took 3 for 10, off 8 overs. Gilbert, who had a slightly lengthened run, bagged 4 wickets for 45, "but it was the tail-enders who gave him his average." He gained his wickets with a particularly fiery burst of pace after lunch.

Gilbert disposed of Darvall and Raymond in his first over, the former cocking up one, and Gilbert followed through smartly to take the catch. Gilbert had Lord leg-before shortly afterwards, and the next ball broke Oxenford’s stumps. The Barambah player has lengthened his run a little, but only at intervals did he unleash his full pace. Rawlings, with a bright 68 runs, was the top-scorer in Central Queensland’s total of 172. Gilbert scored 16 before being out l.b.w. to Raymond. Raymond gained a good deal of pace out of the wicket and secured 3 wickets for 18. Watt proved to be hard to score off in taking 3 for 30.

The second game in which Gilbert played was Metropolis versus Country. In this game Metropolis won by an innings and 14 runs. Country were all out for 66 in the first innings, with Tait making 24, not out. Gilbert scored 5 runs before being bowled by Govan. Govan, the googly bowler, was almost unplayable and took 8 wickets for 20. Metropolis then batted and scored 162 runs. Andrews top-scored with an impressive 51. Sucha was the best bowler for Country and bowled an excellent length in taking 5 for 45, while Gilbert, not bowling at his top, secured 2 for 50, but "lax fielding lost him at least two wickets." Country then scored 82 in

78 The Brisbane Courier, 29 October 1932: 7.
79 Queensland Arrow, 21 October 1932: 12.
80 ibid.
81 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 23 October 1932: 10.
their second bat with the only worthwhile effort being provided by Suche, who scored 30. Before he had scored Gilbert received "a nasty knock on the mouth from a bumping ball delivered by R.K. Oxenham, and was forced to retire."\(^2\) The blow lacerated the lower lip and necessitated the insertion of several stitches. Govan once again tore through the Country players and took another 8 wickets, this time for 30 runs. He finished the match with the sensational bowling performance of 16 wickets at a cost of only 50 runs.

This match was intended to be a two-day fixture but ended early so Gough and Oxenham were chosen to captain two teams, both of which included both country and metropolitan players. Gilbert was selected in Gough’s team.

The game between R.K. Oxenham’s XIII and F.J. Gough’s XIII resulted in a draw. Oxenham’s team batted first and made 239. Jackson, with beautiful square-cutting and off-driving, dominated proceedings to score a glorious 155. Govan continued his great form and took 5 for 83 while Gilbert’s efforts saw him rewarded with 2 wickets for 32, off 12 overs. Gough’s team compiled 173 runs with Gough scoring 30 and Andrews making a sound 33. Gilbert did not bat. Brew captured 4 wickets for 63 and Oxenham took 3 for 15.

Although Gilbert had been in fine form in local fixtures he did not perform to any high degree in the Country Week games. It was suggested that he appeared to have lost a good deal of his "pace, kick and accuracy."\(^3\) The Daily Mail (Brisbane) critically suggested: “Eddie Gilbert appears to have failed in first-class cricket.”\(^4\) This comment was not to influence his selection in the state team.

\(^2\) ibid.
\(^3\) ibid.
\(^4\) ibid., 31 October 1932: 14.
The first match of the 1932-33 Sheffield Shield season against Victoria began on the 28th of October and resulted in Queensland being beaten badly by an innings and 329 runs. Victoria put together the huge total of 552 in its first innings and gave the Queenslanders a "weary day in the field." The feature of the innings was the record partnership by Darling and O’Brien, "who added 301 for the fourth wicket." Darling played "delightful shots all round the wicket" in his brilliant innings of 185. In the early part of his innings O’Brien was dropped by Gilbert at mid-on off the bowling of Govan and then went on to make 145, not out. Ponsford batted soundly before being run out for 98. On a wicket that gave little assistance the bowlers toiled hard but were mastered by the batsmen. Oxenham bowled well in patches and was the best of the bowlers with 4 for 95, off 36 overs, and Govan, the new slow bowler, was expensive in taking 3 wickets for 194. Gilbert often bowled down the leg-side and went wicketless.

The Brisbane Courier, was to report:

Unless his form is all wrong he is not likely to be of great value as a shock bowler again. He has lost his pace, kick and accuracy, and they were all he ever had. Gough bowled him only for seven overs, and when he did not give him a turn after tea it was rumoured that the aboriginal had injured his shoulder.

The Referee along similar lines, said:

Eddie Gilbert is finished. He couldn’t get above half pace on Friday, and the whip through that made him a bowler to be feared by batsmen last year was missing. The Barambah man couldn’t strike a length and Ponsford and Woodfull had no trouble getting him away to leg. Gough only bowled him eight overs throughout the innings, seven on Friday and one on Saturday morning. It looks as if the aboriginal’s big cricket days are over. He seems to have burnt out.
The Queensland total of 54 was the smallest total made by them in Shield cricket and the innings was all over in less than two hours. They had made "a miserable showing against Fleetwood-Smith and Ironmonger." Gough (13) and Cook (13) were the only players to reach double figures for Queensland. Gilbert was out without scoring, bowled by Fleetwood-Smith. Fleetwood-Smith and Ironmonger "made Queensland batsmen pathetic in their effectiveness." Ironmonger bowled with remarkable accuracy to take 4 wickets for 9, off 10 overs, including 8 maidens. Fleetwood-Smith bowled a "disconcerting variety of balls" and returned the astounding figures of 6 for 22, off 12 overs.

In their second turn at bat after the follow-on was enforced, Queensland could only muster 169 runs. As a result the match was won outright by Victoria by an innings and 329 runs. Hansen put some fight in the Queensland effort and made 59 runs. Ironmonger bowled with ‘boring consistency’ in his 1 for 29, off 17 overs, but all the bowlers used shared in the wickets. Alexander, Fleetwood-Smith, and Blackie got two wickets each to end the disappointing display of Queensland. Queensland were simply outclassed in all facets of play as Victoria gave a great display with both bat and ball. The size of the loss was the biggest that Queensland had experienced in the "112 first-class games played since 1893." The next Sheffield Shield match saw Queensland severely defeated by New South Wales by an innings and 274 runs. The New South Wales batsmen "took full advantage of a weak attack." In reporting on the selection of the Queensland team prior to this game and before

---

90 The Brisbane Courier, 3 November 1932: 6.
91 The Sporting Globe, 2 November 1932: 8.
92 ibid.
94 ibid.
other information became public The Referee said:

It was not surprising to find Gilbert's name missing from the list of players. The Barambah man made a poor showing against the Victorians; he couldn't get anywhere near his old pace, and it is apparent that the abnormal strain placed on his bowling arm has taken toll of his stamina. It is doubtful if he will ever be brought into the firing line for Queensland again.95

After the completion of the Victorian match much attention was focussed on the 'failure' of Eddie Gilbert. His performance seemed to warrant greater concern than the efforts of the other Queensland players in the match. One reason for this interest may have been because so much was expected of him and he had 'let people down.' Perhaps for some people he was seen to be living up to the expectations of a common Aboriginal stereotype of 'unreliability.'

As if to highlight the disappointment that Queenslanders had in the performance of Gilbert The Bulletin was to suggest "Queenslanders found compensation for the failure of Eddie Gilbert against Victoria in the spectacular success of Ron Richards, the Abo. cruiser-weight, who in his latest mill [fight] at Brisbane settled Jimmy Pearce, of Newcastle..."96

In a reflection of the 'concern' about the performance of Gilbert in the match the long-serving Chief Protector of Aboriginals (Bleakley) wrote to the Queensland Cricket Association a few days after the match ended. Bleakley was often able to direct and control government policy in relation to the Aborigines and he made innumerable decisions that impinged upon settlement operations. He regularly visited the settlement and had a key role in directing the career and other affairs of Eddie Gilbert. There is little doubt that the cricket career of Gilbert helped to enhance the reputation and public standing of Bleakley. He was anxious to fully investigate the matter, partly out of a real concern for Gilbert, but also because of the possibility that there would be some reflection on him personally.

95 The Referee, 9 November 1932: 15.

Sir,

As mentioned in telephone communication of even date, this Department is concerned about Eddie Gilbert's display in the recent Sheffield Shield Match against Victoria.

In an endeavour to ascertain the reason for his apparent discontent, lack of enthusiasm and obvious listlessness during the match, this Department caused inquiry to be made immediately after his return to the Settlement. A copy of the report furnished by the Secretary to the Sports Club, after making these inquiries is attached hereto for your perusal.

The Department also requested the Medical Officer to examine Eddie in view of the alleged complaints made by him of a pain in his arm. A copy of the Doctor's report is also attached.

I shall be pleased to discuss this matter with you at the earliest convenience and will be pleased if your Association would give its opinion on the advisability of having Eddie brought to Brisbane for examination by Doctor Meehan, as suggested by Dr. Davidson so that his future selection in State representative teams may not be jeopardised if medical attention will restore him to his form.

Yours faithfully,
Chief Protector of Aboriginals.

The ever-efficient Robert Crawford presented a lengthy report as a representative of the Barambah Aboriginal Settlement Cricket Club. In it he was to state that Eddie Gilbert "was perfectly happy with the team this year and he had no complaints to make against any member of the team or Cricket Association official."

---

97 Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit., letter 32/7692, 4 November 1932.

98 ibid.
Based on the information available from various reports and letters written at the time a re-construction of most of the circumstances surrounding Gilbert's injury is possible. This is outlined below.

Gilbert left Cherbourg (Barambah) perfectly fit and in "better condition than on any previous occasion." His bowling in the local fixtures had been good and there were 'big' things expected of him. He went to stay, as usual, with the Allen family at Sandgate.

---

99 Eddie Gilbert, personal file, letter 32/7925, 16 November 1932; letter 07692, 4 November 1932; letter 15 November 1932; letter 18 November 1932; other information.

100 ibid.
He first experienced pain in his shoulder on the morning of the 26th when "he was
practising at Mr. Allen's residence." He told Mr. Allen he was suffering pain and it was
likely that "he would be unable to play in the Shield match commencing on Friday the 28th." He visited some friends, the Malazer family, later the same day, and one of the 'boys'
massaged his arm for him. His arm was still painful on Thursday and Mr. Allen sent him to Mr.
Gibson, the official masseur of the team. Mr. Gibson was reported to have "spent a couple of
minutes on the arm and gave the opinion that the pain was due to a cold in the arm." Eddie
was to later suggest that he had not received a thorough massage. Eddie told Mr. Allen of his
(Mr. Gibson's) opinion although he insisted that he thought he had a strained muscle. He again
visited Mr. Gibson who apparently thought it would be 'alright.' Eddie did not think the pain
had lessened and drew attention to the pain extending from his upper arm into the shoulder.
Despite this he was not examined by a doctor.

After the massage treatment Eddie Gilbert told Mr. Allen that he had no chance of being
able to play on Friday and asked if he could tell the selectors. On the Friday morning he found
the pain no better so he repeated his request to Mr. Allen. Mr. Allen had not given him any
definite intention as to whether he was going to notify the selectors. A naturally self-conscious
Eddie believed that because he was accustomed to dealing with Mr. Allen with all his cricketing
matters he thought that the selectors would be informed and they would contact him. When he
heard nothing he presented himself for play on the day of the match. Based on Mr. Gibson's
opinion, Mr. Allen thought that Eddie would be able to play and did not see the necessity of

\[101\] ibid.
\[102\] ibid.
\[103\] ibid.
\[104\] ibid.
informing the selectors about his 'injury.'

Gilbert did not think it necessary to tell the team captain, Gough, before going on the field, as he thought "the Selectors were fully aware of his condition."¹⁰⁵ The selectors were in the dressing room before the match but none inquired about his shoulder. On being given the ball Eddie Gilbert attempted to bowl his best but "as soon as his arm came into a certain position the pain was acute and he lost power."¹⁰⁶ He was unable to bowl as fast as usual. He then told Gough that he was injured and the matter was discussed with his team-mates, "some of them being particularly interested."¹⁰⁷ Eddie only bowled a small number of overs and was unsuccessful. He became disgusted and "had a feeling of revulsion against himself"¹⁰⁸ and "was affected by his disappointment at being on the field and not being able to justify his inclusion in the team."¹⁰⁹ As a result he lost 'heart' and appeared to be discontented and lacking in enthusiasm when fielding.

Mr. Allen became ill on the Saturday. After the game on the Monday Gilbert went straight back to the settlement a disappointed man and without having said anything further to Mr. Allen, or the Q.C.A. He thought that a doctor should have seen him before he left for home "so that the full extent of the trouble could have been determined."¹¹⁰ He stated that "other players have received more attention than he for injuries or troubles which have been no more serious

¹⁰⁵ ibid.
¹⁰⁶ ibid.
¹⁰⁷ ibid.
¹⁰⁸ Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit., 1932 letters.
¹⁰⁹ ibid.
¹¹⁰ ibid.
Back at the settlement he found that the pain persisted and was "most apparent immediately after resting," and especially in the morning. The only treatment he received was a massage "at odd times by some of his friends on the Settlement." Dr. Davidson, the Settlement Medical Officer, eventually examined him and stated that he had pain during the movement of his right shoulder joint. He recommended that he be examined by Dr. A.V. Meehan, of Brisbane.

The final statement of a report from Robert Crawford suggested:

If Dr. Meehan’s examination results in a verdict that there is a possibility of the trouble recurring, it will appear that Eddie would have little prospect of any State cricket, but it will also clear the apparent misunderstanding at present prevailing, and will enable him to rest on those laurels which he justly and cleanly earned.

In a comment on the circumstances surrounding Gilbert’s injury, the Chief Protector of Aboriginals was to say:

"He is rather a shy boy," said Mr. Bleakley, "and he does not seem to have been able to make it clear enough that he was really suffering from an injury to the shoulder. It was unfortunate, too, that illness should have robbed him temporarily of the one person to whom he could have spoken with confidence."

---

111 ibid.
112 ibid.
113 ibid.
114 ibid.
115 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 23 November 1932: 8.
The doctor who examined Gilbert, Dr. Meehan, reported as follows:

The pain experienced by Eddie is caused through inflammation in a pocket and between the shoulder joint and the arm muscle, which in turn would probably be caused from irritation through excessive use of the right arm caused by bowling. In fact he can definitely state that the pain is directly the result of bowling at cricket.\textsuperscript{116}

The doctor was confident that a complete cure could be made if he rested from cricket for a considerable time and if he also underwent a course of diathermic treatment for a month. The cost of this treatment was to be approximately £2/2- [2 pounds and 2 shillings] a week. The suggestion was made by Superintendent Semple "that Eddie's clubmates and others interested may be prepared to contribute portion of the cost of the treatment"\textsuperscript{117} and might cover his accommodation costs. The Chief Protector of Aborigines (Bleakley) hoped that the Queensland Cricket Association "may feel disposed to contribute towards the cost of treatment,"\textsuperscript{118} especially since the injury was caused through cricket. Because of his contribution to Queensland cricket it was suggested as being in the best interests of State cricket to have Gilbert fit again. However, the Q.C.A. pointed out that they "are not, by their rules responsible for injuries to players except in Interstate matches"\textsuperscript{119} and no assistance was to be forthcoming.

Superintendent Semple, at what was now called Cherbourg Settlement, took a strong paternalistic interest in the plight of Gilbert. He was to express his own concerns "about the unusual treatment as a person"\textsuperscript{120} that Eddie received and also about the possibility of Eddie

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{116} Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit., letter 32/7925 18 November 1932.
\item \textsuperscript{117} ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{118} ibid., 1932 letters.
\item \textsuperscript{119} ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{120} ibid.
\end{itemize}
suffering "a permanent injury to his shoulder" if he continued to play.

Robert Crawford, acting on behalf of the Barambah Settlement Cricket Club, wrote a long letter to the Q.C.A. which said, in part:

My club takes strong exception to the innuendoes in the reports of the current Brisbane Newspapers in respect of Gilbert’s display ...

We are perfectly satisfied that Gilbert was not fit to play in this match and are also of the opinion that Gilbert’s shoulder trouble was aggravated by his playing in the match.

On the last Southern Tour two of the players received medical attention for injuries; but Gilbert was returned from the south, before the completion of the tour, as being unfit without any medical opinion being obtained...

A fortnight has elapsed since the Victoria V Queensland match and the press still speak of Gilbert’s lost form. Your Assn. is extremely quiet on the matter. Gilbert has not lost form, but suffers from injury. Reading between the lines in the press it becomes apparent that many are thinking that Eddie "let the State down." Gilbert emphatically denies this and we support him in his denial. Sufficient time has elapsed to enable the Q.C.A. to make some statement on the matter, whether in Gilbert’s favour or otherwise. Gilbert has a definite public following and he has always tried to keep faith with them and the State, not excluding the last Shield match. Gilbert came into cricket clean and on his merits; he has kept his place in the side purely on merit, and has failed in one match only, and then the cause was beyond his control. He is at least entitled to justice by both press and your Assn., and his public following are entitled to know the reason of his failure.

We look to the Q.C.A. to go carefully into the matter and make public the true facts of Gilbert’s apparent failure and thus clear the lad’s record of the aspersions that are apparently being cast. J.W. Bleakley, Chief Protector of Aboriginals, is our club’s representative in Brisbane. He is fully conversant with our desires in the matter, and has full power to act on our behalf. We trust that you will deal with him personally in the matter.

Yours faithfully,

Robert Crawford. (Signature)
Hon. Secy.
Barambah Aboriginal Settlement Cricket Club.

\. ibid.

\hspace{1cm}

\hspace{1cm}

\hspace{1cm} ibid.
The Chief Protector indicated that "action is being taken in a quiet way through the Press to acquaint the public with the facts of the case."

The Telegraph (Brisbane), for example, carried a story which outlined much of the information from the various reports already mentioned and pointed out that Mr. Crawford, from Barambah, "flatly contradicted the assertion that he had let his State down."

"Fairgo," of The Daily Standard (Brisbane), also outlined some of the unfair and generalised comments being made about Gilbert:

When Eddie Gilbert failed to get wickets in the match against Victoria a few weeks ago, some nasty things were said of him and of aboriginals generally.

That wasn't fair. It was quite evident that something serious was responsible for his poor bowling. So it has proved.

Eddie had to come to Brisbane this week for attention to his bowling shoulder, in which a Brisbane specialist has found a touch of rheumatism.

It will be necessary for him to have at least three month's treatment, which means that he will play no cricket this season.

While in Brisbane Eddie Gilbert was reported as staying with some friends (the Malazer family) and was "elated at the prospects of being able to bowl again." Gilbert, in spite of various adverse and ill-informed comments, was still a popular figure and it was the wish of many that he may "have a chance of hurling the ball at the Englishmen when they come to Queensland."
In early December Dr. Meehan reported that Eddie Gilbert’s "Shoulder not quite well but has definitely improved under treatment." Just before Christmas 1932, the Chief Protector of Aboriginals sent a report on Gilbert’s condition to the Queensland Cricket Association.

20th December, 1932.

Dear Sir:

I have to advise that on Thursday last the 15th instant Eddie Gilbert completed one months diathermic treatment which was administered by Mr. Bonney of Ballow Chambers, Wickam Terrace. During the course of the treatment, Dr. Meehan kept in touch with Eddie Gilbert and on Thursday last advised that further treatment was not necessary but emphasised that the boy should not do any heavy work with the arm for a few weeks to come.

Eddie was anxious to get back to the settlement and departed immediately.

He is feeling very well himself and now suffers no pain. He is grateful for the treatment meted out to him and hopes to be playing cricket again at his old style about the middle of January next.

Wishing you the compliments of the season.

Yours faithfully,

(Initials)

Chief Protector of Aboriginals.

The secretary of the Queensland Cricket Association (Mr. Stephens) replied that he was "pleased to learn that Eddie Gilbert’s shoulder has responded to the treatment he has been undergoing." 

A couple of days after this letter from the Q.C.A. secretary another letter was sent by him enclosing a cheque to pay certain expenses. The letter said, in part: "I am enclosing the Association’s cheque for £6/16/2 being travelling expenses and wages £5/15/2 and Dr. Selwood’s

---

129 Ibid., letter dated 20 December 1932.
130 Ibid., letter 32/8583, 21 December 1932.
A/c for £1/1/-.” In meeting these costs the Q.C.A. was to suggest that "it cannot be held responsible for the clothing for Gilbert" and was not prepared to pay any accounts [£2/12/6] in this area.

The total cost of the treatment received by Gilbert amounted to £12/16-. Contrary to earlier comments that they would not pay for Eddie’s treatment the Q.C.A. donated the sum of £5/5- towards the total cost of this treatment. The Cricket Club at the settlement paid the balance of £7/11-; £3 of which was for board with the Malazer family in Brisbane.

After a few week’s rest the hero of Cherbourg was cleared by the settlement doctor as being fit and he played in a local representative match against Nanango shortly afterwards. The Nanango News reported:

On Sunday last two selected teams from the Nanango District Association visited Murgon and played teams from that Association. Great interest was taken in the matches owing to the appearance of Eddie Gilbert with Murgon No. 1 team. From reports received only Charlie Cook and Rod Penny played Gilbert with any confidence.

Nanango made a total of 103 in their first innings of which Penny made 36, not out. Gilbert had the impressive bowling figures of 6 wickets for 5 runs, off 7 overs (with 5 maidens). Murgon, under the captaincy of Gordon Boume, replied with 4 declared for 317. C. Boume made 104 and G. Bourne scored 103 (retired). In their second innings Nanango were 2 for 25 when a ‘big’ storm ended play. Gilbert took 1 wicket for 9 runs.

Tom Woods played for Nanango and recalled that "we received the biggest hiding you could get. Eddie Gilbert...was often called ‘the Black Streak’ -- you would see him coming and

---

131 ibid., letter 08761, 23 December 1932.
132 ibid.
133 Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op. cit., memorandum, dated 13 January 1933.
then just hear the clatter as the wickets were knocked out!"**

The news about Gilbert's recovery was sufficiently important to the Superintendent at Cherbourg for him to notify the Chief Protector by telegram that he was 'ABSOLUTELY FIT.'** The Brisbane Courier also reported the news and indicated that he was "quite fit to take his place in the Queensland team if he is selected."** Showing great loyalty, as well as faith in Gilbert's recovery, a 'Letter to the Editor' which appeared in The Daily Mail (Brisbane), suggested the selection of Gilbert in the Test team to play England.**

In a match for Cherbourg (Barambah) against Murgon in which "Gilbert bowled with much of his former devastating speed,"** he took 6 wickets for 5 runs, off 7 overs. His performance was of great interest to many.

A letter had been received from the superintendent of the settlement, referring to Gilbert's phenomenal bowling feat during the week-end, which stated that Gilbert at no time was bowling at his top. He maintained a splendid length, and, although the captain of the club for which Gilbert plays had been asked by the medical officer of the settlement (Dr. Davidson) not to bowl him any more than three overs at a time, Gilbert had asked to be allowed to bowl four overs. It was during these spells that he had done the most damage. At the conclusion of the game he had been questioned and examined by the doctor, whom he told that he had never felt better, and, if required, could have bowled faster.

Gilbert, said the superintendent, was looking forward to returning to big cricket, but took exception to the remarks of critics stating that he is a spent force.**

By this time the long-awaited tour by the England team had begun. The Queensland Country team was selected to play a match against the England team in Toowoomba but Gilbert was

---

136 Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit., letter 00181, 13 January 1933.
137 The Brisbane Courier, 13 January 1933: 5.
138 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 17 January 1933: 12.
140 The Brisbane Courier, 20 January 1933: 7.
omitted from this team. His non-selection was of some concern among the local cricket officials and the general public at Toowoomba, "as the appearance of the aboriginal bowler was looked upon as a great draw card for the match."\textsuperscript{141} A letter of protest was sent to the Q.C.A. on the basis that it was "distinctly unfair to Toowoomba."\textsuperscript{142} The suggestion that Gilbert be included in the State team to play South Australia instead of the Country team was seen "as unreasonable, because little importance was attached to the Sheffield Shield game between Queensland and South Australia, as the match was not a deciding factor."\textsuperscript{143} An official of the Toowoomba Association indicated "that the omission of Gilbert would mean a loss of £100 on the gate takings, as the public was interested in his inclusion."\textsuperscript{144} Mr. Stephens, secretary of the Q.C.A., in reply, indicated that he could understand the disappointment about Gilbert, but stated that Gilbert could not play in the Country team if he were in the State team as this would mean "that Gilbert would have to play at least 10 day's cricket on end."\textsuperscript{145}

Public feeling about the matter is very high in Toowoomba, as many people were looking forward to seeing Gilbert in action against the Englishmen, especially in view of the suggestion put forward that he should employ body-line bowling.\textsuperscript{146}

Eddie Gilbert's re-emergence into the cricket world came as Australian and English authorities were embroiled in the controversy surrounding the body-line tactics\textsuperscript{147} being successfully

\textsuperscript{141} ibid., 20 January 1933: 7.
\textsuperscript{142} ibid.
\textsuperscript{143} ibid.
\textsuperscript{144} ibid.
\textsuperscript{145} ibid.
\textsuperscript{146} The Gympie Times, 21 January 1933: 5.
\textsuperscript{147} 'Body-line' or leg theory. The bowlers aimed for the batsman's body, forcing the ball to be played on the leg side, where the majority of fieldsmen were placed. Batsmen stood the possibility of being struck by the ball or were often forced to take evasive action.
employed by Jardine’s visiting England cricketers. It was considered unlikely that the issue would be settled before the Fourth Test match that was to be held in Brisbane in February and some doubt existed about whether the match would go ahead. The Brisbane Courier indicated that Eddie Gilbert would be included in the Queensland team for the match against England and indicated that a local cricket official had said that "he would certainly be instructed to bowl leg theory against the English team."\(^{148}\) It was further suggested that, "if he is given a leg cordon field played to suit a direct attack at the leg stump, he might prove as dangerous as Larwood."\(^{149}\)

The strength of feeling generated by body-line, or leg theory, and the desire by many cricket supporters to get back at England or ‘give them some of their own medicine’ was strong enough for many to see Gilbert as the man to do the job. Various articles, mostly in Queensland papers, were suggesting his selection in the Test side, provided he was fully recovered from injury.

Under the heading of, ‘GILBERT WANTED FOR NEXT TEST BY THE CROWD,’ the Sports Referee (Brisbane) ran an article which said, in part:

> To the man-in-the-street the all-important topic of the day is not the war between China and Japan, or even the disappearance of Hinkler, but whether Larwood should bowl leg theory or not. Even "Smithy's" latest flight across the Tasman has had to take second place to the cricket controversy, and the depression woes are now almost forgotten.

> On Thursday and yesterday a "Sports" man made a short tour of the city, in the course of which he sought the opinions of varied types of citizens on the leg theory. The general consensus of opinion was overwhelmingly against the English shock attack, while a great many paradoxically advocated the inclusion of Gilbert in the next Test to "give them some of their own back."

\(^{148}\) The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 20 January 1933: 7.

\(^{149}\) ibid.
It is probably not an exaggeration in the least to say that at least 75 per cent of Brisbane's 350,000 citizens have spent the past week arguing and talking about the leg theory.

Meanwhile it—and possible reprisals by Eddie Gilbert—are the topics of the hour. There is no doubt of the present popularity of the little Barambah aborigine. A few months ago he left Brisbane almost in disgrace, seemingly having played his last match for Queensland. Yet to-day he is back in a blaze of glory, and all Queensland is looking to him to do sensational things against the Englishmen.\textsuperscript{130}

Comments were sought from local people.

...we all advocate Eddie Gilbert for the next Test. Give him a couple of overs, and then take him off. He is the fastest in the world.

I think they'll have to bring Eddie Gilbert in to throw them out.\textsuperscript{151}

Amongst the various interviews conducted by the paper was one with a lady cricketer.

MISS FAY LEES, who is one of the best women fast bowlers in Queensland, had a decided objection to leg theory bowling in her sphere, "I think it breeds bitterness between two teams and among the players themselves," she told me, "I don't think the women will use it. It may be all right for the men to bowl at each other; but if I hit a woman there would be trouble. Anyway, I don't think it is sporting, but Australia ought not to make such a fuss about it."

I hope they don't bring leg theory into women's cricket. I know if any one starts bumping them down at my head I won't stay there. It's better to be a live coward than a dead heroine.\textsuperscript{152}

The same edition also carried a very pointed cartoon comment in which Gilbert is featured bowling at Jardine, who is dressed in armour. Elsewhere in the paper it was stated that a "respectable citizen has seriously urged the Editor of the \textit{Sports Referee (Brisbane)} so that he may be paid a cash prize of £10 every time he can hit an English batsman with the ball."\textsuperscript{153}

\textsuperscript{130} \textit{Sports Referee (Brisbane)}, 21 January 1933: 6.

\textsuperscript{151} ibid.

\textsuperscript{152} ibid.

\textsuperscript{153} ibid., 5.
reflection of the strong feelings of people another reader forwarded a schedule of awards for the
Australian bowlers. These were:

- £5 for a hit on Jardine's head, £3 for one over his heart, and £2 for one in the
stomach - to a bonus of a "tenner" if he has to be carried from the field as Bert
Oldfield was last week! "For lesser lights, adds the correspondent, "the tariff
could be slightly lower - but not much."

A cartoonist's impression of what might happen in the Fourth Test Match,
if some Australian barrackers get their way!

Figure 5.7 A cartoon impression of the Fourth Test.
The reporter was to comment:

Let me confess, however, that all this fierce controversy leaves me, as a rather cynical bystander, more or less cold. Yet, if I may make a suggestion on the matter, I recommend that the next meeting of the League of Nations Assembly should consider the advisability of substituting cricket for war as a means of settling international disputes. It would be much more pleasant and less harmful - for most of us!\(^{155}\)

In yet another story in the same paper around this time 'Indian' asked: 'Can Eddie Gilbert Succeed With Leg Theory?'\(^{156}\) The article, in pointing out that the former demon bowler was attempting a comeback went on to suggest that, "lack of height and body swing, plus weak fielding, will militate against him."\(^{157}\)

---

\(^{155}\) ibid.

\(^{156}\) ibid.

\(^{157}\) ibid.
Around the same time, the Queensland Arrow carried a story under the heading of,

‘Would Gilbert Play in Team with Bradman?’

Over the horizon of the Fourth Test has suddenly risen a new star - Eddie Gilbert, the clever aboriginal boy whose fast bowling has before now played havoc with some of our best batsmen.

There is talk of his playing, as a counter attack to the English "leg theory" attack - but what does Eddie Gilbert think about it?

Will he be pleased at inclusion in a team that includes Don Bradman? Australia’s star batsman wasn’t very kind to Gilbert in a “talkie” short last year - and the memory may rankle. At the time Gilbert was bitterly hurt. The boy with the dark skin has a white heart, and his popularity in Queensland is as great as Bradman’s. All Queenslanders felt for the aboriginal express bowler when "our Don" was so sarcastic in a film that went all over Australia.

Nothing would please Queensland better than Gilbert’s success against the English crack batsmen, and there is reason for belief that he would be as devastating as Larwood with some fast ones on the leg side. And that would even things up a bit in the "leg theory" war that has marred the most sporting of all games, cricket.

For some time, however, Gilbert has been out of the picture, owing to injury that has slowed his deliveries down. But report has it that he is better, and may be called upon to deal out to the Englishmen what they have been dealing out to Australia.

Gilbert is an unassuming, thoughtful boy, who has shown up well in big cricket, and has always missed getting the swelled head that goes with some types of success.

As far as he is concerned, Gilbert has been a cricketer, and limelight neither thrills nor interests him. In fact, he shrinks from it, and merely plays the game because he likes it.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Queensland Arrow, 27 January 1933: 7. The use of the term ‘boy’ to refer to Aborigines was common and suggests a superior position.
The article went on to recount some aspects of Gilbert’s career and outlined the Bradman ‘talkie’ incident from 1931. It concluded:

That’s how it stands. Gilbert was hurt. Will he like playing in the same team with the cricketer and sportsman who wounded his feelings so bitterly? "The Arrow" tips that if he be invited, like a real sportsman he will go in and do his best, even at the expense of his sadly injured feeling.159

The intense interest in the England tactics was eventually to lead to comparisons between Larwood and Gilbert. Early in the article by W. O’Connor, and which appeared in The Brisbane Courier, it was suggested that Gilbert "would never be as effective"160 as Larwood even if he was faster, and there were doubts about whether this was the case. In a comment that may be viewed as ‘smacking’ of racial stereotyping it was also suggested that Gilbert "has frequently cracked up under punishment,"161 and as a result could not be relied on under pressure.

Gilbert is possibly the best example one could offer of a bowler who gathers his pace in the swing of his arm. Even if his body was brought into greater play, however, he would not benefit to a great extent, for his light weight would be against him. Larwood, although short, is very stockily built, and he has a powerful pair of shoulders to throw behind his deliveries. In short, he owes his great pace to the fact that his arm does not swing away from his shoulder, but moves over with it just before the ball leaves his hand.

For a fast bowler Larwood is amazingly accurate. He appears to be able to fire the ball just where he wants it to go. Gilbert on the other hand, has never given the impression that he possesses absolute control over the ball, and it is unlikely that he would be able to exploit the leg attack as Larwood has done if it were sanctioned.

....

The talk of Gilbert’s inclusion in the fourth Test team cannot be taken seriously, for he has not shown the right form to win himself a place in the Queensland team. Even should he create a sensation against the South Australians, the selectors cannot be expected to consider him seriously.

159 ibid.


161 ibid.
Gilbert will be up against two batsmen capable of punishing any loose stuff that comes their way, so he will have to be at his best if his "comeback" is to be as successful as his admirers predict.²

In amongst all the other news about the England team it was announced that Mr. Len Allen, the secretary of the Queensland Country Cricket Association, was to resign his position owing to ill-health. Allen was the person "largely responsible for the introduction of Eddie Gilbert into Queensland cricket,"¹ and he often had Gilbert stay at his house when he was in Brisbane.

Gilbert was to now mainly stay at Oxford House in the city.

Figure 5.9 'What’s All This Fuss About Leg Theory?' - a cartoon view.

¹ ibid.
With the re-appearance of Gilbert on the cricket scene the issue of more suitable, lighter cricketering shoes for him was of some concern. In a ‘Letter to the Editor,’ to The Brisbane Courier, ‘Cricket Enthusiast’ suggested that "special rubber-soled shoes, with rubber buttons, should be made for the aboriginal bowler." After some discussion about possible solutions to the problem of Gilbert’s footwear the Q.C.A. made "a move in the direction of securing suitable shoes for Gilbert."  

Yet another story, which appeared in The Bulletin, reported that a fund had been opened for the purchase of a special pair of boots for Eddie Gilbert. In its typically racist style this paper suggested that Gilbert was "prevented from bowling his fastest in the cumbersome boots of the white pfeffer [sic]," and "the abo. should be supplied with something more tasteful and light which would give his plates of meat something like their accustomed untrammelled freedom." The money was to be forwarded to the "boss at Gilbert’s mission station" who would then "arrange for the manufacture of the boots."  

The concerns about Eddie’s boots would be raised from time to time during his career. Some reports indicated that he bowled bare foot which is a comment that appears to have stemmed from the fact that he took his boots off to bowl at one stage in the Country Week carnival of 1930. The racial overtones of such comments could not be avoided.

---

164 ibid.
165 ibid.
167 ibid.
168 ibid.
In January 1933, *The Brisbane Courier* was to publish a ‘humorous’ verse full of racial stereotyping.

‘Boots for an abo,’ muse the camp-fire seers;
‘Baal! he no want’em,’ each young lubra jeers--
(Theirs is an unshod ancestry of a million years!)
Eddy’s adamantine sole that bush nuts crack!
Why dim their prowess in mere ‘tan’ or ‘black’?
Eddy’s ancestral foot—primordial shape,
With aptitudes combined of man and ape--
For feet like these should clumsy Bluchers gape?

Comments like these were rejected by Betty MacKenzie who lived on the settlement.

A press report said Eddie played cricket in bare feet. This is untrue. In fact, practically all men on Cherbourg wore boots (or sandshoes) -- in the 20’s and 30’s anyhow, the only exceptions being some of the old men and boys. And as for a published item that Eddie used the word "plurry" -- this is most likely purely from the journalist’s ignorant belief that was how all aboriginals spoke.

Long-time cricketer, Stan Lord, gave his views when the issue was revived many years later.

I was privileged to play in cricket teams both with and against Eddie Gilbert and was in the Queensland Country team the first year Eddie was selected to play Brisbane.

Players dressed liked cricketers and behaved like cricketers, and Eddie Gilbert was no exception.

---

170 *ibid.*, 28 January 1933: 10.


CHAPTER VI

A RESUMED CAREER

A short time before the announcement of the State team to play South Australia at the end of January, Gilbert was brought to Brisbane to undergo a trial before the state selectors. There was some indication that Gilbert "may have sacrificed some of his pace in an endeavour to alter his style sufficiently to avoid any possibility of being no-balled." This was partly true. Another story suggested that "an operation to his arm has enabled him to bowl with almost his old devil and much greater accuracy." The bowling trial created considerable interest and was witnessed by 300 spectators, including a number of interstate and international players. Eddie Gilbert was hero-worshipped by "a crowd of admiring youths" who were 'colour-blind' when it came to recognising this outstanding and exciting player.

The selectors had a chat with Gilbert in the dressing room. When he emerged he was greeted with applause, and walked unconcernedly towards the bowling end of the net which had been set aside for his trial.

The selectors had another short chat with Gilbert, and then Mr. E. H. Hutcheon threw him a new ball, with the instructions to "bowl in your ordinary style, Eddie!"

Gilbert coolly marked off six paces, and with his customary rapid approach let go at the wicket—there was no batsman at the popping crease. The ball was of ordinary medium fast pace. Gilbert seemed dissatisfied with the length of his approach to the bowling crease, and he again measured off six paces.

Incidentally, it might be mentioned that this is the original length of the run he took to the bowling crease when he was at his peak.

The second and third balls did not make much pace, but the fourth was a real thunderbolt, and its accuracy was deadly, the middle stump flying out of the ground to the back of the net, to the cheers of the crowd.

---

1 The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 17 January 1933: 8.
2 The Brisbane Courier, 4 February 1933: 8.
3 The Daily Mail, 26 January 1933: 13; The Referee, 25 January 1933: 15. The Referee was to headline: 'Public Interest Centred in Comeback of Aboriginal Fast Bowler.'
"Jardine next, Eddie," called a man in the gallery. The sally did not seem to disturb Gilbert. He never even smiled.

Gilbert’s trial continued under the direction of Mr. Gill for about the duration of three regular overs. Once, after instructions from this official, it was noticed that Gilbert centred on the leg stump, appearing to shorten his length. However, the wicket was a very easy one, and only occasionally did the ball rise above what would have represented the height of a batsman’s hips.

**NOT AT HIS TOP.**

A number of inter-State and several internationals witnessed the trial.

Archie Jackson said, when asked for an opinion, "Obviously Gilbert is not yet at his top physically. The majority of the balls were hardly above medium fast pace. His length was good, and he got through one or two balls that on a match wicket would probably have been fiery. Given a little more practice, he may work up some of his old pace."

Sid Redgrave said, "he will be peppery after a little more practice. It is evident that he has not done much bowling this season."

One of the selectors remarked that with a leg field he would be a menace to the opposing batsmen.4

After the trial Gilbert said: "I feel fit, and my shoulder is all right."5 The State selectors also appeared to be satisfied with his fitness.

In view of the poor performances of the Queenslanders on the Southern tour it only seemed reasonable that the selectors would be prepared to give Gilbert the opportunity to prove himself again. This was borne out when the Queensland Cricket Association advised the Chief Protector of Aboriginals that Eddie Gilbert was selected to play for Queensland in the Sheffield Shield match against South Australia.6 Despite the fact that Gilbert had not played first-class cricket since his injury this did not stop Mr. Hutcheon (President of the Q.C.A.), from going so

---

4 ibid.

5 ibid.

6 Eddie Gilbert, personal file, Queensland Department of Community Services, 1988, memorandum dated, 19 January 1933. Gilbert usually stayed with Mr. Len Allen but he was not "in the best of health" at this time and Gilbert was to stay at Oxford House.
far as to indicate that if he performed well "he would be under consideration by the selectors for play in the fourth Test match in Brisbane."7

The Telegraph (Brisbane) kept the interest in Gilbert going when it published a photograph before the next Shield match with the caption: "Eddie Gilbert is fond of animals as well as cricket. Here he is seen at the Barambah Aboriginal Settlement with his favourite dog."8

Although it was not stated officially, 'Red and Black,' of The Referee, believed "that the real move behind the resurrection of Gilbert is to give him the opportunity of trying his hand at the latest leg theory form of attack exploited by the Englishmen."9 This view was not that of Gough, the State captain.

"As far as I am concerned, as captain of the Queensland team, there will not be any body bowling against the South Australian team," said Mr. Frank Gough, the Queensland captain, when the proposal that Gilbert should adopt such tactics was brought to his notice.10

An article in The Referee was a 'harsh' analysis of Gilbert's bowling action.

Gilbert has always bowled on the leg side; sending them down from well out on the wide mark as he does, he invariably swings away from outside the batsman's legs, and it is doubtful if the dusky one could bowl on the off if he wished to.

If Gilbert plays against England and is not allowed to use a leg-side field, a lot of people will want to know why he has been brought back in the State XI, for, unless the aborigine has completely recovered his form, he may prove a very expensive unit without the assistance of a strong leg field.11

Gilbert was considered a bowler who was inclined to make the ball skid through off the pitch and generally keep low. This was seen as a draw-back to his ability to bowl leg theory.12

7 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 18 January 1933: 11.
8 ibid., 26 January 1933: 8.
9 The Referee, 25 January 1933: 15.
10 The BrisbaneCourier, 23 January 1933: 7.
12 Sports Referee (Brisbane), 28 January 1933: 6.
Figure 6.1 The state selectors (Holdsworth, Gill and Hutcheon) confer with Gilbert.

Figure 6.2 Schoolboys' idol - Gilbert surrounded by admiring youngsters.
'Indian,' in the *Sports Referee* (Brisbane), drew attention to the fact that he thought Gilbert now had a slightly different bowling action to when he was so fast against Bradman.

Much has been said of late regarding an operation on Gilbert's shoulder, and we are told that he has regained all his old-time pace. But I honestly do not think that Gilbert will ever be again the devastating force he once was. Following the no-balling episode he spent the whole of last winter trying to eliminate the apparent jerk in his action, and cultivated a much longer run. Unfortunately all he accomplished was to take not only half his pace away, but to rid his attack of much of its surprise element.

At the peak of his fame he took a run of a few steps, and then his long, black arm swung over his head, to send the ball fizzing down, gathering great pace off the pitch. He often made the ball swing across the wicket most awkwardly from the off to the leg.¹³

In the rain-affected match against South Australia Queensland made 129 and 192 against the visitor's totals of 249 and 1 for 76. The game resulted in an outright win for South Australia by 9 wickets and 4 runs.

Queensland batted first and on a good wicket suffered from its now customary collapse in making a total of 129. Andrews batted well for his score of 34. Grimmett was the chief wicket-taker for South Australia with 6 for 49, off 15.6 overs. Despite his figures Grimmett's bowling could not be considered outstanding.

South Australia made 249. Nitschke (47) and Tobin (47) both batted attractively. The Queensland team believed that Nitschke was caught behind off Gilbert early in his innings. Lonergan was unluckily dismissed at 31 "when he tried to hook a ball from Gilbert, and it trickled on to his off stump to shift the bail out of the socket."¹⁴ Tobin was bowled by a 'hummer' from Gilbert which "appeared to swing in and beat the batsmen with its pace."¹⁵


¹⁴ *The Referee*, 1 February 1933: 16.

¹⁵ ibid.
Gilbert, "in a decided improvement over his Victoria form," was the most impressive of the Queensland bowlers. He bowled very well and was unlucky not to gain the wicket of Richardson when he snicked the third ball he faced from Gilbert just over the head of the first slip, Gamble. Gilbert's bowling figures were 4 for 58, off 16 overs. Because his name had been associated with the leg theory discussions, particular attention was paid to him but he gave the impression of being short of practice.

Queensland batted a second time and scored 192 runs. Levy, the top-scorer, batted "in forceful fashion for his 68." Gilbert scored 10 before being out lbw to Lee. Grimmett finished "with the splendid figures of 7 for 86," off 24 overs.

Only requiring 73 runs to win, South Australia achieved this with the loss of only one wicket. Richardson was 39, not out, and Lonergan, not out, on 28. Oxenham took 1 for 12 and Gilbert had 0 for 24 and "failed to reveal any of the testing ability which at times characterised his bowling in the first innings."

In reviewing the match it was generally believed that Gilbert had a reasonably successful comeback. It was considered unfortunate that Queensland were unable to have taken "the advantage that Gilbert's early successes gave them."

---

16 *ibid.*


18 *ibid.*

19 *ibid.*

20 *ibid.*

21 *The North Queensland Register*, 3 February 1933: 84.

22 *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 7 February 1933: 2.
Figure 6.3 Tobin (South Australia) clean bowled by Gilbert for 47.

Figure 6.4 Richardson and Lonergan walk to the pavilion, followed by Gilbert, at the end of the Sheffield Shield game.
In an article by "Third Man," and under the heading of "Gilbert's come-back," The Telegraph (Brisbane) discussed changes evident in Gilbert's bowling during the match:

I do not think that he bowls as fast as when he first came into Queensland cricket; neither is there any suggestion of a throw in his action. He takes a slightly longer run, but does not bring his arm back to below his knee as he used to do, and he therefore does not throw his body into the final effort with the vigour that was responsible for his faster ball lifting more sharply from the wicket. At the same time the speed which he now develops is sufficient to cause batsmen considerable trouble.\(^2\)

Throughout his career Gilbert's bowling action was exposed to intense scrutiny by experts who often offered quite different opinions of the same thing. For example, The Sporting Globe, in a contrasting comment on Gilbert's bowling action to the one outlined above, believed that he had made a very successful comeback. "Adopting his original short run of four to five yards, he hurled the ball with great pace and accuracy at the batsmen."\(^3\) The same report indicated that, although he was not as fast as in the past, "he displayed good stamina, and his physical strength was good despite strenuous exertion during the match."\(^4\)

Despite the different views mentioned it would be reasonable to suggest that Gilbert's bowling action was much the same as it had been for some time. Gilbert like many bowlers would have made changes to his bowling action according to the game and what he was attempting to achieve. This is quite normal, and apart from poor observation by the quoted writers, may well have been the basis for the conflicting judgments outlined.

The South Australian match was the last Shield match of the 1932-33 Sheffield Shield season and Queensland failed to score a single point after having been beaten outright in every game. Gilbert had played the first match of the season against Victoria, did not go on the Southern Tour, and returned to the team from injury to play South Australia.

\(^2\) Ibid., 30 January 1933: 8.

\(^3\) The Sporting Globe, 25 January 1933: 8.

\(^4\) Ibid.
The next game for Queensland would be against the visiting England team and a great
deal of interest was centred on the way that Gilbert might perform against them. Should he be a
success there would be some further advocacy of his Test match claims. With regard to his
bowling The Sporting Globe believed: "Gilbert will keep to his own theory, which proved
effective enough for two seasons."26 On the subject of leg theory the same paper said:

Queensland selectors and other Q.C.A. officials refuse to commit themselves on
the subject. All say the captain is supreme on the field, and will be given no
instructions in this matter.

Gilbert is very obliging, and is prepared to bowl any theory. He says he is in
great condition, his shoulder being so strong that he has been splitting posts. He
has expressed the opinion that Sutcliffe or Hammond will be his first victim if he
bowls leg theory. Naturally he is anxious to play for Australia.27

The Bulletin hoped that Gilbert would "shock the world with gory bodyline and effectively
dispose of Jardine, Larwood and co."28 Gilbert had never bowled leg-theory before but was
reported as indicating that "I have absolutely no objection to bowling leg theory, and further, I
will get more wickets by doing so."29 He did not think that leg theory should be prohibited
because: "It was the bowler's job to get batsmen out, and as long as he stuck to the rules, there
could be no objection to the bowler using the theory."30

The Englishmen had heard much about Eddie Gilbert, and were "looking forward eagerly
to facing him." 31 An article was written about the intrigue and ignorance surrounding him.

26 ibid., 1 February 1933: 8.
27 ibid.
29 Sydney Morning Herald, 21 January 1933: 13; also quoted in E.W. Docker. Bradman and
30 ibid.
31 ibid., 9.
The Englishmen [season 1932-33] were looking forward to seeing Eddie Gilbert, the Aboriginal fast bowler. They had heard many stories, which no doubt were issued in a playful way for propaganda purposes. One patriotic Australian pressman told Bob Wyatt and Tubby ['Gubby'] Allen on a dark night, as the train was winding its way through the North Coast ranges, that this fellow Gilbert was a tough proposition; that he played without boots, and could kick a brick further than George Duckworth could kick a football, that this dusky man from the wilds of Australia was fed on raw beef for a week before the match against England. It was certainly a surprise when, on being introduced to Gilbert, they found a well-educated, quite charming lad, who was employed as a sportsmaster at a Mission Station.\[32\]

Superintendent Semple, just prior to the Queensland versus England match, telegraphed the Chief Protector of Aborigines with the message:

WILL YOU ARRANGE THAT GILBERT HAS CLEAN CLOTHING FOR MATCH AGAINST ENGLAND.

SUPT CHERBOURG.\[33\]

Eddie was duly "instructed to send his cream trousers to the laundry."\[34\] At the same time a last-minute check found that he was suffering no pain in his arm and that "Eddie advised that he was receiving satisfactory treatment from the cricket authorities and players."\[35\]

The almost unbelievable level of paternalism displayed by Semple is the result of a way of thinking which suggests that Aborigines (in this case Gilbert) are not capable of looking after their own affairs. Although suggested elsewhere, it is worth re-stating that Gilbert, at no time in his career, appeared to have much freedom to make real choices about his cricket.

Gilbert's life was controlled by the operation of the Aboriginal Protection Act where even his adult affairs were closely monitored by the white officials at Cherbourg. On his cricketing trips he was able to escape many of the provisions of the Act and this freedom and his


\[33\] Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit., entry 33/303, 1 February 1933.

\[34\] ibid.

\[35\] ibid.
experiences undoubtedly affected his thinking, and, more significantly, his character and attitudes. Between matches Gilbert returned home to Cherbourg but his cricketing achievements brought him no personal autonomy and independence from white authority. Except for the cricket trips the control of his life was complete.

After some calls for Gilbert to bowl ‘body-line’ a rumour circulated that Gilbert would experiment with this method even though Gough, the state captain, had previously indicated to the press that he would not employ this tactic against England.

The Queensland Arrow pushed the issue:

If Frank Gough captains Queensland against the Englishmen to-morrow he can make himself a national hero by turning Eddie Gilbert loose on body-line bowling.

The Queensland skipper would be the first captain in Australia with the courage to meet the Jardine-Warner combination on their own battle ground.36

Gilbert was not to bowl leg-theory after being instructed to keep to ‘orthodox’ methods by team captain Gough. Gough believed that "It [body-line] was detrimental to the game and would surely cause the withdrawal of the married men."37 The thinking of Gough was questioned by the Queensland Arrow:

If the Englishmen intend to play the leg theory, the Queensland captain should be prepared to meet them at their own tactics. There is excellent material in hand in Gilbert, and if the English captain is made to realise that before the game he may be a trifle chary about taking the initiative with this “straight at the batsman” type of bowling.

... There cannot be much wrong with standing Jardine and company up to some of their own medicine.

It may be taken for granted that Gough would have the backing of the Q.C.A. officials, if he decided to stack a leg field for Gilbert’s bowling.

36 Queensland Arrow, 3 February 1933: 12.

Almost everybody knows that the real reason behind the resurrection of the Barambah youth is to have him bowl the body-liners.

Why then should the fans be denied the opportunity of seeing the Englishmen themselves shape against an attack that is considered good enough for our own batsmen.  

Despite the ‘build-up’ the match was won outright by England by an innings and 61 runs. Queensland batted first and the batsmen compiled a total of 201 runs before a crowd of 10,000 people. Litster (67) and Andrews (45) shaped best with the bat for Queensland, while Cook was "painfully slow, patting back balls that should have brought him runs" in compiling 53. Gilbert made 6 runs, including a ‘four,’ before being out, stumped by Ames off Leyland. A number of the England bowlers shared in the wickets. Larwood (2 for 24) never "worked into his top pace" and Verity bowled 28 overs without change and achieved 2 wickets for 49 runs. The best figures for the innings were returned by Bowes, who finished with 3 wickets for 43, off 15 overs. The fielding was not considered to be first-class.

38 Queensland Arrow, 3 February 1933: 12.
39 The Referee, 8 February 1933: 10.
40 The Brisbane Courier, 7 February 1933: 5. With regard to ‘body-line,’ The Brisbane Courier (4 February 1933: 8) was to state:

Thirty years hence the leg theory will have receded into the back ground of half-forgotten things. What will excite the public then? Only time, and, with it, the development of cricket will tell.
During the Queensland innings an incident occurred that highlighted the feelings evident during the 'body-line' series. The Australian Cricketer reported:

Oxenham had made 8 when he turned a ball from Larwood to the on and Allen, fielding close in, brought off what appeared to be a good catch. The Englishmen knocked off play and started throwing the ball to one another, taking it for granted that the batsman was out. When Larwood saw that Oxenham was still standing his ground, however, he appealed to the umpire for a catch. The umpire, whose view had evidently been obstructed by the batsman at the bowler's end, conferred with his colleague at square-leg, who had not seen what had taken place because Allen's back was turned towards him. Consequently the umpires had no option but to give Oxenham not out. Upon hearing this decision, Larwood showed his feelings in no uncertain way, and signified his disapproval of the umpire's decision.\(^1\)

The bowler and fieldsmen, believing that Oxenham was out, had sat down on the grass. When the umpire surprisingly indicated 'not out' Larwood rose to his feet. "What? Are you going to stop? he demanded. Oxenham didn't answer, but his silence was enough. "Give me that ball, "said Lol. [Larwood] 'I'll show him."\(^2\)

Syd Redgrave jnr., was at the match and recalled:

"Oxenham didn't know where the ball went but he didn't move because he didn't know anything about it."

Dad was sitting in the grandstand with Morris Tait and another coloured fellow playing for England - I forget his name - and they said to Dad: "I bet the next three balls are at Ronnie Oxenhams' head."\(^3\)

\(^1\) The Australian Cricketer, 1 April 1933: 13.


\(^3\) Syd Redgrave jnr., personal interview, February, 1992.
Figure 6.5 England cricket team 1932-33 tour.

Figure 6.6 International cricket - Queensland versus England.
Larwood was wild: "I said to myself, "I'll make you wish you'd left the wicket when you were out. I dropped him several short ones at my fastest. They reared past his face. He went white." Of the incident, Bowes, who was in the team with Larwood, later said: "Never have I seen Larwood bowl so fast or so dangerously." Larwood deliberately bowled at the batsman and had used intimidatory tactics until he was taken off by Jardine.

The crowd hooted every ball Larwood sent down. Fortunately, perhaps, Oxenham was dismissed (bowled) in Allen's next over. M.C.C. player Bowes later wrote: "Never have I seen a batsman more pleased to go pavilionwards than was Oxenham." The Australian Cricketer commented: "Though Oxenham was pretty certainly out, it was no excuse for Larwood to act as he did. It created a very bad impression as an opening for the Fourth Test."

Later in Queensland innings and after the Queensland wicketkeeper Len Waterman had been run out a further and largely unnoticed incident occurred. Syd Redgrave jnr., recalled:

The umpire was Jackie Bartlett, only a little fellow. He was umpiring away from the grandstand and somebody [Waterman] was run out at the bowler's end and the bail was knocked off and Jardine was fielding on the drive and he walked in and picked the bail up and walked down to the slips and started talking to the men...Bartlett walked down to ask for the bail. The wicket was here and the bail there and he said: "Could you give me the bail, please?" and Jardine looked at it and threw it over there past point and Jackie Bartlett had to walk from there to get it.

He was telling me this as I walked home with him from the Gabba. He said: "Syd, I did a foolish thing. I had a spare bail in my pocket. I should have gone and put that one on and left the bail stay there where everybody on the ground could see where Jardine had thrown it. Jardine was a bastard for what he did."
There was great interest when Gilbert opened the bowling for Queensland against the visitors.

Jardine and Verity opened the English innings at ten minutes to six. Gilbert showed pace in one or two balls of the first two overs, the ball flying through on the leg side. Verity got the full face of the bat to two straight ones in the opening over, and they made the bat spin in his hands. The Yorkshireman went close to snicking one behind that made pace outside the off stump, but, apart from that, there was nothing sensational in the colored [sic] man's two overs.49

The crowd had viewed the use of leg theory (body-line) in the game with a great of hostility, particularly since examples of it had been seen at a recent Third Test match at Adelaide. They howled for Gilbert to 'attend' to Jardine, after also witnessing the demonstration of leg-theory by Larwood earlier in the day. One account has said:

It was near the end of the first day. There was time only for a couple of overs when Jardine, wearing his Harlequins cap, took strike and Gilbert, urged on by the crowd "to get stuck into the Pomian bastard" ran in for his first ball. He may not have been as quick as formerly, but he was still very fast and quite obviously aiming at the batsman. Several deliveries flew just wide of the mark, but before the end of the over he scored one hit, on the point of the hip-bone. Jardine staggered and almost fell, but he waved back assistance as one or two players and the umpire approached him. He stood up, his face very white, and took fresh guard. Otherwise he showed no signs of being hurt and very soon he and Verity were on their way stiffly back to the pavilion, two tall Englishmen oblivious to the chant "Bastard, Bastard," that came from a portion of the crowd that had surged onto the field and now attempted to block their way.

Police formed a lane for them and his back straight as a ramrod Jardine mounted the few wooden steps to the dressing-room door...walked to the table in the centre of the room, ignoring the odd remark of "Well played, skipper," and still looking straight ahead, asked if all but the England players would leave the room. When this was done, he collapsed on the table and speaking through teeth clenched in agony said, "This hip. It's giving me hell." There was in a short time an area about the size of a saucer all discoloured and in the centre an area of nearly raw flesh." "That was real courage", said Hammond, "when a cricketer sees that spirit in his skipper he remembers it always and tries to play on for his side as long as he can stand on two feet."50

In the book, The Fast Men, by David Frith, he was to suggest: "He [Jardine] collapsed when he reached the sanctity of the dressing-room and as fellow players slipped his trousers away they

49 The Referee, 8 February 1933: 10.
50 Docker., op.cit., 117.
found blood on his shirt-tail."51 Bowes, in his book, *Express Deliveries*, indicated that this event occurred after Gilbert had "managed to get one of his fastest deliveries through Jardine's defence."52

England put together a total of 343 runs. At one stage Queensland had 6 wickets for 169 runs before Allen and Ames had a profitable partnership. Several of the batsmen contributed with reasonable scores. Top-score was 80 by Ames, while Allen made 66. Wyatt made 40 after a stumping chance was missed when he was 9. Sutcliffe made 35 and Jardine, the captain, 34. Waterman, the Queensland wicket-keeper, had a bad day and missed a number of chances, and "it was due to his mistakes as much as anything else"53 that helped England compile a match winning score. In the bowling department Gilbert and Oxenham "certainly did appear to bowl right above themselves,"54 and both were considered unlucky not to get better results after having suffered from missed chances behind the wicket. According to *The Australian Cricketer*, "Gilbert bowled at rare pace and had several of the batsmen smiting [hitting] the air with the ball well past the wicket and on its way to the 'keeper."55 Oxenham varied his pace and flight well and with 4 for 70, off 33.6 overs, including 11 maidens, was the best of the Queensland bowlers. Govan was expensive in obtaining his 3 wickets at the cost of 59 runs, off only 6 overs. Gilbert's 2 wickets cost him 93 runs.

52 Bowes, op.cit., 108.
53 *The Brisbane Courier*, 7 February 1933: 8.
54 *ibid*.
55 *The Australian Cricketer*, April 1933.
Most attention was to focus on the performance of Eddie Gilbert. One spell of bowling was described by The Brisbane Courier:

The aboriginal was a constant source of trouble to the English batsmen, none of whom showed any inclination to take him cheaply. He sent down a couple of costly overs before he attained his maximum speed, but when he worked up to top pace there was scarcely a scoring shot played off him in front of the wicket. The crowd then saw a new Gilbert galvanised into a display of rhythmic action and speed that very few believed him capable of.

He was ‘nursed’ carefully by Gough who adopted good tactics when "he pitted him against every new batsman that went in." Gilbert had bowled a number of balls at medium pace but he improved his pace at times and in one over it was apparent that "Sutcliffe did not see a couple that went through particularly fast."

The two left-handers, Leyland and Paynter, fell to Gilbert’s bowling. Leyland (2) didn’t relish the coloured [sic] man and he was missed behind before Gilbert knocked back his middle and off stumps with a good-length one which beat the batsman all the way. Gilbert bowled a very fast over to Paynter. One or two were on the short side and looked like throws. The Lancashire left-hander hooked one for four and then was out l.b.w.

The standard of the Queensland fielding was good, "the stars in this department being Levy, Gilbert, and Gough." Gilbert’s display, in particular, drew comment and "He was even one of the live wires in the field, where he is usually so lethargic, and dozens of runs were cut off by his sprightly interceptions at point."

---

56 The Brisbane Courier, 7 February 1933: 5.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 The Referee, 8 February 1933: 10.
60 The Brisbane Courier, 7 February 1933: 10.
61 Ibid.
Queensland put up an inept performance in the second innings and compiled a 'pathetic' total of 81. Highest score was 17 by Oxenham, followed by Gamble with 14. Gilbert made one before being bowled by Larwood. In the second innings Larwood 'slipped into gear' and tore through the Queensland batting line-up. He returned the excellent figures of 6 for 38, off 8 overs, with 1 maiden. Verity also contributed to the destruction of the Queensland batsmen by his fine performance of 4 for 20, off 6.3 overs.

Figure 6.7 Gilbert with cricket ball.
The game was seen as an opportunity of comparing the speed and abilities of Larwood and Gilbert, but Gilbert was "entirely cast into the shade by the performance of Larwood." In a comparison of the speed of the bowlers various opinions were expressed that Gilbert's bowling was the fastest, especially in his second over. "Larwood was not bowling all out, was the defence of some English supporters."

The performance of Gilbert in the match was considered promising but it was not enough to warrant Test selection, if indeed it would have had he been more successful. He bowled fairly fast, but, according to The Brisbane Courier, his length was not quite as good as it might have been, and he bowled far too many half volleys." The view of the Queensland Arrow was that Gilbert's performance was mediocre and "not class enough, and [he] has lost much of his speed. Without it he is mediocre." One of the England players, 'Gubby' Allen, was to later write that "he [Gilbert] was possibly somewhat nervous of letting himself go" and "he was neither very quick nor suspect." Yet another account suggested that he had received "some rough treatment from the English batsmen."

---


63 The Gympie Times, 26 January 1933: 5.

64 The Brisbane Courier, 26 January 1933: 8.

65 Queensland Arrow, 17 February 1933: 11.


67 ibid.

68 Docker, op.cit., 119.
In personal correspondence, and in reply to a question about Gilbert being a contender for Australian honours, the noted cricket commentator Alan McGilvray has said:

No. Never. He was playing at the time when Tim Wall was the pace bowler for the Australian Team. Wall was not as fast as Eddie but he had great control of the ball in the air and moved it both in and away. He once took all ten NSW (10) wickets in an innings on the SCG...a team that included players like Bradman, Kippax, McCabe and Fingleton. Not a bad bag of wickets. Eddie depended entirely on pace...no swing nor movement and from my point of view when I played him that he could not maintain sheer pace for much more than 3 or 4 overs in any spell. I do recall there was some mention, mainly in the Press, that Eddie should be selected to retaliate against Jardine's tactics in the England Team of 1932 when what was called Bodyline tactics by Larwood and Voce...

This was a most unpleasant period of cricket...i.e. bowling at the batsman's bodies with 6 and sometimes 7 fieldsmen surrounding the batsman on the leg-side. The suggestion then was that Eddie should adopt the same tactics. I very much doubt that the selectors gave much thought to those suggestions for as I earlier said Eddie was not accurate enough to bowl to such fields as did Larwood and Voce with great accuracy.

Further the Australian Captain at that time was Bill Woodfull who had Tim Wall in his team and Tim could have applied the same tactics as England. But Woodfull absolutely declined to retaliate even though a few members of the Australian Team suggested to vice-captain Vic Richardson that he should speak to his captain and make the suggestion. Vic did approach Woodfull and later Vic told me Woodfull replied to him in the manner of "Vic there is no way I will be influenced to adopt such tactics which brings [sic] such discredit to the game...I know Tim could do it but I will not let him. We will just have to take it...tough as it is but I am not going to participate in actions that can only hurt the game."

Woodfull's opinions were later fortified when after suffering a dreadful blow on his heart and lying on the massage table he was visited by the Manager of the England team in the dressing team who expressed his condolences and to hear Woodfull's reply "there are two teams out there and only one team is playing cricket."

The conversation there ended. So any chance of Eddie adopting those tactics were [sic] negative. I do not recall any other suggestions that Eddie should be selected to play for Australia. In essence he was just not good enough and there are dozens of other players about whom it could be said...they were close but just not good enough. Eddie was not good enough to oust Tim Wall.69

Almost every cricket follower had their own opinion about the likelihood of Gilbert being selected to play cricket for Australia (or Queensland for that matter). Although Gilbert was not destined to play Test cricket he did have the opportunity of assisting the embattled Australian team at a

69 Alan McGilvray, personal correspondence, February 1990.
training session. The Gympie Times carried a report:

Both test teams were at practice on the Brisbane cricket ground to-day and a fair crowd watched them at the nets. The crowd saw Bromley, the youthful left hander, indulge in some vigorous batting. Gilbert, at the special request of Woodfull, sent down many bumpers, but most of the batsmen played them confidently.\textsuperscript{70}

Despite some early optimism the Test match was to result in a victory for the England team by 6 wickets. This ensured that England won the controversial series. Australia batted first and compiled 340 runs while England replied with 356 runs. At their second effort Australia made a modest total of 175. Set 160 to win England achieved this with the loss of 4 wickets (for 162). Larwood finished the match with another 7 wickets and took his total to 28 wickets in the four tests.

During the Test match Gilbert returned home by car to Cherbourg (Barambah) and resumed playing cricket in the local competition. Mr. Stulpnagel, the fictitious character in David Forrest's short story 'That Barambah Mob,' knew the local influence that Eddie Gilbert had.

"It was all right when he made his trips to Brisbane. But then you'd come into town one day and a fella'd say t'you, 'Gilbert come home on the train this mornin'. ' And you wouldn't sleep so good as the fixture come up."

....

Mr. Stulpnagel rolled up his left sleeve over his biceps and we examined the corrugated and dotted scar imprinted there by the seam of a cricket ball. Mr. Stulpnagel said, "It wasn't Larwood done that."

He inclined his head and we studied the scar on the top of his head. The mark was old and brown and still recognizably a diamond in shape. Enclosed in the diamond, in reverse, were the letters "...manufactured in Austra..."

We whispered, "Gilbert?"\textsuperscript{71}

The Chief Protector of Aboriginals Report for 1933 was to chronicle the continued success of the settlement's sporting teams:

\textsuperscript{70} The Gympie Times, 9 February 1933: 5.

Occasional visits to neighbouring towns by the teams for friendly matches against whites have been allowed, and splendid reports have been received of the behaviour of the men.

The Cherbourg cricket team again won the district competition, with Eddie Gilbert still the idol as a fast bowler.\footnote{Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals for 1933: 16.}

Although not selected in the Australian team Gilbert was almost universally given great loyalty and support by the inmates of the reserve. One former resident recalled how the people of the settlement felt about Eddie Gilbert’s cricket career:

Very, very proud. When he’d come back to Cherbourg it only took one person to see him and the word would get around fast, and before he could get to his house the whole mission would be there to greet him back home. Even the white managers were proud of him, at the time superintendent Semple was in charge. It was a very big achievement for an Aboriginal in those days, because of the colour bar in Murgon. In the picture theatre, the Aboriginals had to sit right down the front, or right at the back. We were never allowed to sit in the dress circle. They wouldn’t serve blacks in the pubs either.\footnote{Lambert McBride, personal interview and written material provided by daughter (Jill Linda McBride-Levi), May 1989.}

About this time another song was added to those already sung by the players on the trips to matches against teams outside the reserve. The people on the settlement were so proud of Gilbert that they made up their own song about him - with apologies to ‘Our Don Bradman.’

Betty MacKenzie recalled:

"And its our Ed-die Gilbert -  
And I ask you is he any good?  
And its our Ed-die Gilbert -  
As a bowler he is certainly ‘plum pud’!  
When he takes in hand the ball  
He makes all the wickets fall  
And the boy from Barambah ..."  
and here my memory fails me, but the song finished:  
"And its our Ed-die Gilbert -  
Every cricketer lifts his lid to you."\footnote{Betty MacKenzie, personal interview and information, March 1988.}
Figure 6.8 Listening to Test 1933.
'Paddy' Wharton played football in the South Burnett area and also knew of the pride that the settlement inmates had in Eddie Gilbert.

When we were playing football over there we used to come around Cherbourg to come into Murgon and they'd be walking into town, into the football. We'd always pull up -- it was a big truck -- and give them a lift in and every one we picked up we'd say, "Do you know Eddie Gilbert?" "Oh him, him cousin of mine." Eddie was a cousin of the whole bloody lot of them. [Laughter].^* A friend of Gilbert's, Eileen South, who came from the settlement but was working in Brisbane, remembers him when he was in Brisbane:

I seen him play. He and I were great pals and I used to go and see him play in Brisbane. I was working at Morrow's and the times he used to go down there and play we used to often go and have meals with...lunch and that with him - the girls and I...other girls that were there.^*

The career of Eddie Gilbert was during the so-called 'Depression years.' The Depression of the early thirties saw high levels of unemployment and the imposition of trade tariffs strained relations between Britain and Australia. By 1933 nearly one-third of all bread winners in Australia were unemployed. Even those that were employed suffered because the fall in real wages was not matched by the same decline in the retail price of goods and services. It was a hard time of personal sacrifice and survival for many and an experience which was to leave a lasting fear and impression on those who suffered most.

The Depression years proved to be particularly unhappy years for the Aborigines and government policies "towards them varied between neglectful and oppressive."^* Many Aborigines, particularly those working on the western stations, were sent to reserves during this

---

^* 'Paddy' Wharton, personal interview, June 1991. Other informants, in a reflection of the popularity of Gilbert, also pointed out that 'all' the people on the settlement were his 'cousins.'

^6 Eileen South, personal interview, April 1988.


time. Settlements such as Cherbourg (Barambah) were labour depots, especially for the rural sector, but during the depression outside employment and local casual work declined. This had a significant effect on the settlement due to the reduced amount of money earned by the inmates. All inmate’s earnings, with the exception of a settlement levy and a small amount of pocket money, were put in a Trust account as a way of ‘protecting’ the workers. However, money was known to be withdrawn without approval and diverted into settlement funds and a levy was also placed on savings. The levy monies were directed towards the maintenance and upkeep of the settlement as well as for capital works. Blake has indicated that, "By spinning an intricate web of accounts and procedures, the department was able to plunder the earnings of inmates at will."79

With many people experiencing tough times cricket, with its personalities and attractions, proved to be a diversion and a source of great interest. It was a distraction from a fairly miserable day-to-day existence and was a way to fill in time. The introduction of ‘wireless’ broadcasts opened up the live broadcast of cricket and this also had a great effect on the popularity of the game.

A number of the cricketers of the time became well-known and their exploits were outlined in detail by the newspapers. Don Bradman was already a national hero and Eddie Gilbert was someone ‘everybody’ would have heard of or read about.

Gilbert had proved to be "the greatest sensation in Queensland cricket in recent years"80 and was sought after to play in matches at different places. His appearance invariably resulted in larger attendances although he did not gain much, if any, financial reward himself. Eddie Gilbert was away from the Settlement from the 24th of January to the 8th of February. Soon after his arrival home the Chief Protector sent to the Q.C.A.


80 Bundaberg Daily Times, 13 March 1933: 3.
...a statement of expenditure which was made by the Department in connection with his recent visit for the purpose of representing the State in the Sheffield Match against South Australia and the Match against England.\textsuperscript{81}

The amount sought was £5/13/9. It was pointed out that, immediately prior to his leaving the Settlement, he was "receiving wages at the rate of £1:-:-- per week."\textsuperscript{82} The compensation claimed for wages was based on this rate.

Although he was in the cricket spotlight back on the settlement he had a fairly mundane existence working at the school and with various work parties around the settlement. He was more fortunate than many to have a job. Due to his cricket career he was not sent far away on work parties for extended periods of time as some other inmates might have been.

Queensland player of these times, Des Hansen, recalled the effect of the Depression years on his life:

During the early years of the Depression I was just out of school. Souths [Cricket Club] were kind enough to let me play for them without paying any dues. Anyone who left school during the Depression were handicapped for the rest of their lives. I got a lot of practice though. I'd go to the Gabba there of an afternoon. I'd go every day I had nothing else to do.

I got a job about 1934. The Minister for Works was out there [Gabba] when I got 147 against South Australia and he got me to go and see him and he gave me a cricket bat and then he said..."Come and see me on Monday," and then he said when I met him there, "Come and see me on Monday and I'll give you a job." cricket got me a job.\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{81} Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit., Letter 33/645, 15 February 1933.

\textsuperscript{82} ibid.

\textsuperscript{83} Des Hansen, personal interview, June 1992. Hansen recalled that on the southern cricket tours unpaid leave had to be taken from his job. Around 1933-34 he was paid 17/d. a day allowance while on tour. At this time he was earning £4 a week with the Public Service. Hansen was unaware of any special financial arrangements made for Gilbert or any other players.
Bradman, in contrast to Gilbert and many other cricketers, created tremendous interest and he attempted to use his cricket success to gain financial security. Derriman has said:

Bradman is a product of Australia’s experience of the Great Depression. The bodyline conflict occurred precisely at the time of greatest recessional misery. It was still a young and predominantly rural Australia, an Australia still riding on the sheep’s back rather than swinging on a mineral boom. The British experience of the Great Depression was a grim despairing granite-like urban process. There was no space for escape. No light for hope. It was a different environment in Australia. There was no work. The dole was meagre. But men could revert to the improvisational techniques of a disappearing pioneer world. Tens of thousands lived through the Depression in precisely that fashion, camping out and living off the land, getting out on the road and looking for work.

There was a breed of Depression man, and the young fellow from Bowral thought like him, and battled for a future in the same fashion. Look at any of those depression years’ photographs, a mass of men frozen beneath their Akubra hats, and amongst them will inevitably see a Bradman. Their business was personal survival. You made your best efforts and took your luck. There was no envy. 

All through these years cricket gained in popularity at all levels.

At a match at the East Bundaberg recreation ground, Bundaberg, in March 1933, the usual pattern of interest followed Gilbert. The visiting Murgon District team arrived by train and were accorded a civic reception before the match. After this the East Bundaberg Cricket Association played a match against the visitors.

Bundaberg batted first and "the advent of Gilbert was awaited with interest by the crowd." Bundaberg compiled 157 runs, with Maughan top-scoring with 33, not out. Gilbert did not bowl at top speed but in 12 overs, for 13 runs, he ‘bagged’ 5 wickets.

The ball with which he bowled G. Reynolds was full of pep, and the batsman never sighted it. It was through and had dislodged the bails before he realised that it had left the bowler’s hand.

---

85 Bundaberg Daily News and Mail, 13 March 1933: 3.
86 ibid.
Figure 6.9 Murgon Representative cricket team 1933.
Murgon replied to the Bundaberg total with 161 runs. Dahlke and Draheim, with 30 runs each, topped the score. Fleming bowled effectively for Bundaberg to secure 5 for 52, off 12 overs.

East Bundaberg were all out for 76 in their second innings, of which Fleming contributed, 28, not out. Gilbert finished with 5 for 18 to return the match figures of 10 wickets for 31 runs.

Murgon made the required 84 runs for victory with the loss of 4 wickets. Zeit was 36, not out. Gilbert made 6. The wickets to fall were shared by all the bowlers.

After the match the visitors were guests at a dance and the next day before their departure they went for a swim at the local beach.87

Fred Kratzmann remembered this match and outlined some information about how Eddie Gilbert ‘fitted’ into the team:

I went to many rep. games. We’d stay in the one hotel and Eddie would be in bed early and he wouldn’t go out drinking. He wouldn’t even go to the pictures. We had two men to a room. You’d probably find in these rep. matches there might be two or three from Barambah playing. They used to sit in the back of the truck playing these gum leaves. Well they’d keep together – keep in the same room. We didn’t push them aside but they like to keep together. All the players usually stick together in clumps in the team they came from unless they had a cobber [friend] in another team. ‘Gus’ [Thaler] played for Queensland. Old ‘Gus’ used to say that when Holdsworth used to take a team from Brisbane with Eddie in it he was quiet. The others would go out but Eddie would go to bed. He’d be the only dark boy in the team when they toured.88

Gilbert was invited to play in a match organised by a Mr. Gill in Townsville at Easter despite plans for him to play for Murgon and District against a Brisbane team of Colts, which included some interstate players. The local Association were keen for him to play for them because they felt that they provided the competition and practice for him and, therefore, “have prior claim for his services in representative teams except when required by the Q.C.A.”89 If he were to go to Townsville, Mr. Crawford, of the Cherbourg Cricket Club, wanted to be assured that Gilbert’s

87 ibid.

88 Fred Kratzmann, personal interview, April 1992.

89 Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit., Letter 01286, 24 March 1933.
"travelling and accommodation expenses will be paid, and, further, that an allowance of 5/-
[shillings] daily be paid to him on the tour as pocket money." Crawford pointed out that the
local Sports Club "will not accept any financial responsibility whatever in this connection and
Gilbert's financial position will not permit of him incurring an expense in this respect." Gilbert
eventually did go to Townsville but before he went he was involved in a match at Gympie that
served to re-enforce his considerable reputation, particularly in the country areas of Queensland.
To ensure his attendance at this match the Gympie Cricket Association agreed to defray Gilbert's
expenses for the visit.

Murgon batted first and made 136. C. Bourne top-scored with 36. Gilbert opened the
batting and gave an interesting display of left-handed batting, "using good judgement in selecting
the balls to score from, driving forcefully and timing his leg strokes nicely." He made 20 runs
before being run out. Kennedy took 5 wickets for 45 for Gympie. Gympie made 84 in their turn
at bat with Behmer making 23. Gilbert took 6 wickets for 18 (all bowled). The Gympie Truth
was to report:

Gilbert's exhibition was worth watching, though he did not necessarily exert
himself every ball. The lightning flight of the leather left the batsmen bewildered,
when he did bowl at his top, and it seemed they were suffering from stifling
imagination on other occasions.

In their second innings Murgon made 168. G. Bourne made 60 while the next best was opener
Gilbert, who was bowled by White when he had made 45. At the close of play Gympie were 8
for 154 in their second innings. Kennedy had scored 77 and sundries totalled 27. Gilbert
captured 3 for 11 and Czislowski took 3 for 57. The match ended in a first innings win to

90 ibid.
91 ibid.
92 The Gympie Times, 11 April 1933: 7.
93 The Gympie Truth, 10 April 1933: 4.
Murgon by 69 runs.

The exploits of Eddie Gilbert at this match were recalled by Tod Schacht:

When I arrived at the ground the game was well under way with "Saxophone" Kennedy in the sixties and batting beautifully. (Kennedy was possibly the best left-hand bat north of Brisbane at the time).

A hush fell over the ground when a change of bowling brought Eddie Gilbert back to the crease.

After he bowled the first few balls he seemed intent on moving the leg fielder to a finer position. Gilbert was being cunning. I could see that he wanted to move the fielder without Kennedy noticing the change.

At last the fellow observed the frantic signals from the Aborigine when the batsman was not looking at Gilbert. The stage was set.

In he came, the black arm flashed and his body doubled up. Kennedy, a perfectionist with the fine leg glance, turned the ball off his heels.

It tore, chest high, through the waiting hands of the fine leg fieldsman who was positioned half way to the boundary then rocketed along the ground into the picket fence - four more runs to Kennedy and another dropped chance for Eddie Gilbert!

The following day the fast bowler entertained the crowd with his batting, he opened the innings and compiled a very good [half] century.

His stroke making was fluent on both sides of the wicket.

Leading Queensland country players participated in the game. I am sure he could have fulfilled the role of a middle order batsman in the Shield matches if he had been given the opportunity.4

---

A niece through marriage, May McBride (nee Ross), remembered when Eddie used to visit Gympie and she "used to fight over putting that white stuff [shoe cleaner] on his cricketing boots." Of one of his cricketing visits she recalled:

He was playing with the Murgon cricketers and they came to Gympie once and he was so fast that he smashed the wickets in Queen's Park in Gympie. The people over the road they exhibited in their shop for a week the wickets that Uncle Eddie smashed. Spring was his name -- he was in the leather business -- saddlery. That always stuck in my mind.

May McBride overlooked mentioning that the wicket that was broken occurred when Spring himself was dismissed. Robert Crawford recalled:

Alf Spring was first wicket down. Jack Lane, the baker of Murgon, was standing on the boundary and Eddie let go. I could tell a fast ball -- I knew him that well. He smashed the middle stump in the centre and Jack caught the ball...Next man -- Eddie gave him a couple of good ones then a little hop and he's gone. He [batsman] had a red patch here or there -- never saw it.

A revealing insight into Eddie Gilbert as a person was also given by May McBride:

He was very quiet, reserved, and when he played with the Murgon team and came to Gympie they all gave him a write-up that he was a real gentleman. It never went to his head -- the success when he bowled Bradman...he never skited about himself and he was a very quiet man. He used to come to the people's place that I used to work for-Barnes -- and they'd make him have a cup of tea -- make a cup of tea for him or have something nice -- dinner with us and they thought a lot of him.

He never spoke much and I remember once when he came to pick me up in Gympie to take me to the pictures -- to the local pictures. When we walked in his mates -- they were saying, "You got your girlfriend," and he was terribly embarrassed and he spoke very quickly, "Oh no, no. This is my niece, my niece." I could always remember that I was in my teens then and things like that he got quite upset about.

---


96 ibid.


98 May McBride, personal interview, op.cit.
At the end of March 1933, "The Barambah Settlement cricket team met with their first defeat for some time at the hands of a strong Taabinga Association representative eleven." At the previous meeting of the two teams Barambah had won by 114 runs on the first innings, scoring 185 and dismissing T.C.A. for 71. The latter scored 188 in their second innings.

In this particular match Eddie Gilbert was, of course, the main attraction. The Kingaroy Guardian and Taabinga Times was to report:

He had a lean day, his one wicket costing 29 runs and only two runs coming off the bat. At times the ball jumped dangerously, and three or four landed in the centre of the pitch to fly well over the heads of both batsmen and wicket-keeper, but on the whole he kept the ball down.\(^{100}\)

Barambah scored 109 in their first innings. Bligh top-scored with 28. The chief factors in Barambah's defeat were the bowling of Walter, who 'bagged' 3 for 0 in three over and Thomson, whose figures read 5 for 23, off six overs. Taabinga replied with 220 runs. Ollson gave his best display of the season in scoring 61. Fisher, with 5 wickets, was best bowler for Barambah. In the second innings Barambah were 4 wickets down for 74 at the close of play.

A visit that Gilbert was to make to Townsville was as a member of a Q.C.A. team. This team played two matches in the northern city as part of the Townsville Cricket Association Easter carnival.

In the first match the Q.C.A. team batted first and made a total of 160. Cook top-scored with 46. The best bowlers for Townsville were Suche with 5 for 32 and Growder took 4 for 48. In reply Townsville amassed a total of 182. Tait played a chanceless innings for his 63. Gilbert was clearly the best of the bowlers and took 5 wickets for 41, from 17 overs. In their second innings the Q.C.A. made 175. Tallon made a fine 74 and Gilbert made 4 runs before Tait held a drive off his own bowling. Tait gave a brilliant and match-winning bowling display for

---

\(^{99}\) The Kingaroy Guardian and Taabinga Times, 31 March 1933.

\(^{100}\) ibid.
Townsville by collecting 6 wickets for 53. Townsville required 154 runs in its second innings to win the match and in reaching this total lost 4 wickets. Litster contributed 46 and Mottershead made 40 (not out). Gamble took 2 wickets for 34 and Gilbert had one wicket at a cost of 39.\(^{101}\)

The second match of the northern tour was against a North Queensland team. This team had three changes to the Townsville team that had played the day before. North Queensland won the toss and batted.

Gilbert opened the attack to Litster from the Grammar School end, and his first delivery was well off the wicket. Litster gave a chance in slips off the sixth, Amos just touching the ball as it flew overhead to the boundary.\(^{102}\)

North Queensland made an impressive total of 281. Tait showed fine form to make 79, not out. Gilbert sent down a number of short-pitched balls but ended up with 5 for 62. The North Queensland total of 281 was passed with the loss of six wickets, the Q.C.A. innings closing at 368. Thaler made 78 and Farquhar made 74, not out. Of the northern bowlers McAvoy proved to be the best with 4 for 92 while Growder took 3 for 85. In North Queensland’s second innings, one wicket was down for 56 at the close of play. Mottershead made 30, not out, and Gilbert had 1 for 10. The Q.C.A. won the game by 4 wickets.\(^{103}\)

Before his visit to Townsville Gilbert had made an application to visit the Aboriginal Settlement at Palm Island after the games and this was approved.\(^{104}\) As well as being of interest to the inmates of the settlement there would have been many people at the Palm Island settlement who were sent there from Cherbourg (Barambah) for various, usually disciplinary, reasons.

\(^{101}\) The North Queensland Register, 22 April 1933: 85.

\(^{102}\) ibid.

\(^{103}\) ibid.

\(^{104}\) Eddie Gilbert, personal file information, op.cit.
As the only widely known sporting identity that Aboriginal people had Eddie Gilbert did have some effect on the lives of at least some Aboriginal people outside of the settlement. Les Stewart, an inmate from Cherbourg, gave his opinion about this and in doing so has also highlighted the fact that Aborigines may have different expectations to whites with regard to a role in sport:

A lot of Aborigines didn’t think you could get into things like that [cricket]. Their attitude was, "No way any of us can do those sort of things." When Eddie went into cricket...not only people here but right throughout Australia -- even in Palm Island they used to talk about him...Eddie Gilbert used to come up there to visit a few of his relations up there too, Palm Island. "This is the famous Eddie Gilbert, the fast bowler." The kids and all used to follow him [Laugh]. For Eddie was a really shy man and he didn’t like that sort of thing.105

In recognition of the financial hardships that most players endured in representing Queensland the Q.C.A. held a meeting to discuss the issue of adequate compensation. In August, The Telegraph (Brisbane), announced that

...the Queensland Cricket Association executive has given favourable consideration to the question of increasing the allowances paid to players who represent the State in Sheffield Shield and international matches. If a recommendation which they will place before the delegates in the near future is adopted, the allowance will be increased from 12s. 6d. a day to 15s., with an additional 5s. a day for married men. All claims for reimbursement for loss of salary will be abolished.106

Unlike some of the Southern states, Queensland did not have great financial reserves. The paper suggested that a ‘watchful eye’ be kept on the question of players’ allowances. It did suggest, however, that there should be “no hardship imposed on any player whose ability warrants selection in the State team.”107

It has been mentioned how Eddie Gilbert’s career was to cause him financial difficulties. During August 1933, a Departmental report was to outline some of the ‘full’ costs of his first-


106 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 31 August 1933: 6.

107 ibid.
class cricket career.

It will be remembered that during last Cricket Season Eddie Gilbert’s form was most inconsistent. Even after the injury to his arm had been rectified it was recognised that when he took the field he was not the same player as he was in previous years.

Reference to a list of balances of the Cherbourg Natives Savings Bank A/c’s shows that at the 30th June this boy’s A/c was in debit to the extent of £10-11-11 in spite of the fact that the Superintendent gives him constant employment at productive work for which he is paid a reasonable wage.

During my visit to the Settlement it was gathered that while Eddie was anxious to gain cricketing honour, and to do service for his State, he was not particularly keen on obtaining representation in the Sheffield Shield Team next season as it meant that he had to incur expenditure beyond his means with the result that his total earnings on the Settlement were devoted to the repayment of his overdrawn account.

It must be recognised that although an aboriginal, when playing with a European State Cricket Team, he is called upon to provide clothing equivalent to that of his white team mates and to spend pocket money etc. on a similar scale to them. It can be seen that, as his wage on the Settlement is calculated to provide for him in native fashion, it is impossible for him to finance cricket trips with the result that apart from the honour and glory (and criticism) the only thing that Eddie can look forward to from the result of his cricket is an ever increasing debit balance in his Savings Bank A/c. It might be mentioned here also that the Settlement Recreation Club has also financed Eddie’s cricket to the extent of a considerable sum.

If the Q.C.A. desire the services of Eddie Gilbert for Sheffield Shield Matches next Season I suggest that the special circumstances of his case be put forward and it be pointed out to the Association that the only way to inspire the boy is to assure him that he will not suffer financial loss by playing. The suggestion might be advanced that in order to overcome the difficulty Gilbert receive a definite fee sufficient to cover the special expenditure necessary, or that the wage paid as compensation by the Association be not less than the basic wage, (previously wages at the rate of 25/- to 30/- a week only have been claimed and paid).

- - Puipor
24.8.33

On the settlement the inmates were required to undertake various daily tasks without pay. In addition, the Superintendent employed a select group of inmates to perform certain jobs such as building or work in the dormitories. These inmates were only paid through necessity in an effort

---

Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit., Letter 33/1702, 24 August 1933.
to ensure the effective operation of the settlement. Because of his cricket career Eddie Gilbert was given employment with this ‘privileged’ group of settlement workers and did not have to seek casual work off the settlement in local farms. However, when he was away from the settlement with his cricket he received no pay plus he had the extra costs of travel, equipment and other expenses. Superintendent Semple lived up to his reputation of being very ‘stingy’ with money. He made little or no attempt to help Gilbert financially by continuing to pay his wages when he was away from the settlement or injured as a result of cricket. The non-payment of wages due to absence from work was normal for most state cricketers but due to the low level of wages and earning capacity of Gilbert, allocating him some extra assistance would have eased the worries caused by his financial problems. This money would have been some compensation for the promotion of the settlement (and its officials) and government policy that his career offered. In this regard Semple failed to support Gilbert although he made considerable efforts to gain a level of financial assistance from the Q.C.A. This process usually degenerated into ‘discussions’ over amounts due. The burden of supporting Gilbert’s cricket career was unfairly taken up by the inmates through funds raised for sport and various facilities on the settlement.

Semple saw himself as a benevolent protector of Gilbert’s interests but on closer examination he did not exhibit a consistent view with regard the treatment of Gilbert. On the one hand he gave Gilbert priority by providing him with a settlement job but then he denied him a regular income because of his cricket career. It is highly unlikely that there would have been any official questioning of any action to pay Gilbert a wage while he was away with his cricket but this was not done. Instead Semple sought to ‘play’ with Gilbert’s career by the way he dealt with the Q.C.A. over finances and other matters. Although Gilbert offered Queensland cricket much his career could have easily ended a number of times if the Q.C.A. had firmly refused to give Gilbert special assistance. In the end even this support from the Q.C.A. proved to be insufficient in providing Gilbert with both financial security and a first-class cricket career.
As outlined elsewhere the working inmates on the settlement were expected to contribute towards the operation of the settlement through various levies on their wages and savings. Gilbert was unable to do this and the debt that he incurred by being involved in first-class cricket would have been the cause of a degree of anxiety and uncertainty for him.

The financial hardships associated with Gilbert's career now placed his future participation in the game in severe doubt, as The Courier-Mail (formerly The Brisbane Courier and The Daily Mail) pointed out:

The superintendent of the Barambah Aboriginal Settlement has advised Mr. E.C. Cumming, honorary secretary of the Murgon and District Cricket Association Eddie Gilbert is not available for country week to commence in Brisbane on October 23 unless the Queensland Cricket Association makes arrangements with the Chief Protector of Aborigines for the payment of all Gilbert's expenses if selected.

In the circumstances Gilbert's name was not in the list of players nominated to the Country Advisory Committee by the Murgon Association last night.

It is understood, however, that the country selectors intend choosing Gilbert for the South Queensland team to-day, and that the necessary arrangements will be made by the Queensland Cricket Association to pay all Gilbert's expenses.

The position with other country players chosen for country week is that the Country Committee, with the help of a grant from the controlling body, pays the living expenses of its representatives, and that each player who takes part in the carnival pays his own travelling expenses.\(^\text{109}\)

\(^{109}\) The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 12 October 1933: 8.
On the 18th October the Cherbourg (Barambah) Settlement Cricket Club advised that it "could not finance Gilbert for the season.""110

Memorandum.

It has been decided by our Sports committee that they cannot see their way clear to finance Gilbert this Season, should the Queensland cricket Asso. want his services as a bowler.

During the past seasons the Sports Fund had to supply all clothing etc. for Gilbert but our funds prevent us from doing so as they are at a low ebb.

Should the Queensland Cricket Assoc want him to play in Brisbane or elsewhere they will require to pay all his expenses and supply him with the necessary clothing.

W Porteus Semple (Signature)
Superintendent111

Mr Robert Crawford, as Secretary of the Cherbourg Settlement Sports Club was to propose certain conditions to the Q.C.A.. The outcome was that the Q.C.A. agreed to pay him at a rate of 17/6 a day during his absence from the settlement, and in addition, either supply him with clothing or grant him the sum of £15 to cover clothing expenses for the season. It was a decision that was to ensure that Gilbert was able to continue playing the game.

The Sporting Globe, in its preview of the 1933-34 Sheffield Shield season, suggested that Gilbert was good enough to make the State side again.112 However, there was to be a new threat to the continuation of his career. In the middle of February, The South Burnett Times had reported on a couple of cases of leprosy on the settlement.113 Now, later in the year, and just before the commencement of the cricket season, there were more reports that "Another

110 Eddie Gilbert, personal file information, op.cit.

111 ibid. It was noted at the time that Gilbert's fingers were a little sore and he was not bowling now as well as he had done last year.

112 The Sporting Globe, 11 October 1933: 8.

113 The South Burnett Times, 17 February 1933.
The Sporting Globe, under the heading ‘Eddie Gilbert - Will Not Play This Season,’
announced the disappointing news that Gilbert would not play for Queensland during the season.

The reason is that there has been an outbreak of leprosy at the Cherbourg (Lake Barambah) Aboriginal Settlement, where Gilbert lives. Gilbert had been chosen to play in the country week games, and the Q.C.A. has decided that all country players must house together. In the circumstances it was felt that it would not be right to allow him to play.

In regard to the Shield games, the Q.C.A. fears that his inclusion in the Queensland team would lead to trouble with the players, some of whom were not keen on having him in the team even before the discovery of leprosy at the Cherbourg station.

Dr. J. Coffey, the Queensland Commissioner for Public Health, says that the exclusion of Gilbert is ridiculous. His playing in a match would not in the least endanger the health of the other players or the public.115

It was a fact of life at the time that there were many fears about various health matters. The conditions on the settlement occasionally led to disease outbreaks which were more severe than in the general white community. The concerns of white people were such that it always seemed the correct thing for settlement officials to impose restrictions on the movements of at least some inmates during these times. Gilbert was included in this group.

114 ibid., 20 October 1933. The health of the inmates was always far from satisfactory. The 'open' nature of the settlement also contributed to the incidence of disease among the inmates.

A letter written at the end of October outlines all the issues that contributed to Gilbert's non-participation in the Country Week Carnival.

Eddie Gilbert was selected by the Queensland Cricket Association Country Committee to represent South Queensland during the Country Carnival Week at Brisbane on the 23rd October, 1933.

Some discussion arose as to the payment of his expenses relating particularly to the expenditure of his clothing. It was understood, however, that suitable arrangements could have been made with the Queensland Cricket Association in this respect. However, owing to the cases of Leprosy on the Settlement the question arose as to the advisability of allowing him to mix with other cricketers especially as the matter was receiving such publicity in the Press and because of the general horror of the disease.

Eddie Gilbert was anxious to again seek State representation by performing in Country Fixtures, but when it was pointed out to him that if he came to Brisbane remarks might be passed concerning the leprosy which would cause him discomfort, he agreed that it would not be wise to make the trip.

The Queensland Cricket Association subsequently decided to cancel the invitation to him to be present at Country Week and indicated that they would not consider him for selection in Sheffield Shield games during the 1933/34 season.  

Figure 6.10 Gilbert in settlement band.

116 Eddie Gilbert, personal file information (27/10/33), op.cit.
Under the circumstances Gilbert expressed, or was convinced to express, a ‘wish’ to withdraw and this was supported. It was considered to be too much of a risk to allow Gilbert to go to Brisbane, "and place him in the company of 23 other country representatives." The Q.C.A. reaction of over-riding any Departmental action on the matter was most extraordinary but perhaps justifiable from the point of view of protecting themselves from any adverse comment. The Home Secretary was not impressed:

Home Secretary Mr. Hanlon said to-day that an official ban has been placed on Gilbert coming to Brisbane to play. It was absurd to suggest because of leprosy at the settlement that Gilbert should not be allowed to visit Brisbane.

Queensland's first Sheffield Shield match of the season was against South Australia. The match was won by Queensland by three wickets and one run but this did not stop The Sporting Globe from suggesting that there "was a great need for the services of Eddie Gilbert." The Gympie Times was to point out:

Wherever he has played throughout Australia, Gilbert has always been a big drawcard and as he is now bowling even faster than before he will test the batting ability of the local stars, several of whom are keenly looking forward to meeting this wizard of the cricket ball.

In the meantime, in his enforced isolation back at Cherbourg, Gilbert was displaying good local form. In a match against Murgon he took 4 for 12 in Murgon’s first innings total. Cherbourg replied with 174. In the second innings Murgon made 121 runs and Gilbert took 3 for 18.

Playing for the Murgon and District team against Gympie at the end of November Gilbert gave an excellent display of bowling and took 12 wickets for 59. In their first innings Gympie made 153 runs on a ‘tricky wicket.’ Gilbert ‘cleaned up’ the batsmen to take 6 for 36.

---

117 ibid.

118 ibid.


120 The Gympie Times, 21 November 1933: 5.

121 The South Burnett Times, 24 November 1933.
in reply made a small total of 27 runs. Gympie was to eventually win the game outright. Gilbert
took 6 wicket for 23 in the Gympie second innings. Murgon scored 168 in their second
innings.\textsuperscript{122}

The success at Gympie did not escape the attention of 'Color Blind,' of The Daily
Standard (Brisbane), especially since Gilbert had been 'banned' from the State side due to
concerns about the leprosy cases at Cherbourg.

Is it dangerous to bring Eddie to Brisbane but not to take him to Gympie. What a
farce. Why does not the Q.C.A. say straight out that Gilbert was not wanted by
a certain clique in the Queensland team, and not try to manufacture flimsy excuses
that a child could see through? The crowd want him, so bring him down and
forget his color [sic].\textsuperscript{123}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure6.11.jpg}
\caption{Local identity Eddie Gilbert.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{122} The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 27 November 1933: 6; The Gympie Times, 28 November
1933: 7.

\textsuperscript{123} The South Burnett Times, 22 December 1933.
CHAPTER VII

THE QUEENSLAND HERO

Over the years the relationship with some members of the various state teams that Gilbert was in was to cause the surfacing of envy and ill-feeling, and, more than likely, had overtones of racism. Because of a lack of clear evidence it is difficult to identify the level of non-acceptance in the Queensland team and all those individuals responsible for any problems. Various incidents have been recalled by people, including one passed on to a friend by a former State player, Roy Higgins:

A neighbour of mine in boyhood and who later played for Queensland told me of his great displeasure with treatment of Gilbert by other members of the team when visiting Sydney. While all other members enjoyed the comfort of a hotel, Eddie camped in a tent in the hotel yard.¹

This story runs contrary to the generally circulated view that he was treated well and fitted in with the team. From other evidence this story does not seem to represent an accurate account but it may reflect a certain ‘distancing’ that did occur between Gilbert and at least some other players, both on the field and off. It also gives some support to the press references and private rumours that circulated in the public about Gilbert and his treatment by some members of the State teams.

There is very little evidence of Gilbert in social interaction with other players, except on formal occasions. Certainly, with the exception of the relationship with his mentor in Brisbane, Len Allen, there is little information which would suggest a close friendship between Gilbert and any other team member, although at least one Queensland player from this time, Des Hansen, did indicate that he spent some of his leisure time with Gilbert while he was staying in Brisbane.

¹ Confidential correspondence, October 1988.
I was only young and had nothing and this chap — Barton I think his name — they used to take Eddie out at nights and he said to me, "Why don't you come with us to keep Eddie company." We went out to the old Bohemia to wrestling and they used to have the boxing and Eddie wanted to get in the ring and have a 'go' at one of the boxers and he said: "I would clean him up."²

There may well have been courteous team 'friendships' which were developed on tour or during matches but perhaps the racial thinking and social pressures of the 1930s precluded a continuation of any relationship past this. Gilbert was usually 'returned' to the settlement immediately after each match and this would have made any invitations difficult to accept. Even so, Gilbert for his part would have obviously preferred to spend his spare time at his home with his family and friends. The settlement induced cultural and social differences (including language) between Aborigines and whites which, coupled with his experiences with white people, may also have been a factor in his relationships with 'team-mates.' Examples of the different features of social life could be seen in the importance settlement inmates placed on communal activities such as inter-visiting, corroborees, gambling, dances and sing-songs, funerals, hunting and fishing trips, and sport (particularly cricket and football matches).

The team 'problems' were just one of a number of stories that circulated during Gilbert's time in cricket and shows the intense interest that people had about him. Coinciding with the 'withdrawal' of Gilbert from the first-class cricket scene for the season were rumours that were circulating in some quarters to the effect that Eddie Gilbert was lazy and irresponsible and that he drank heavily if given the opportunity. With some degree of certainty, former Lord Mayor of Brisbane and cricket enthusiast, Clem Jones, was to remember from his youth:

I recall seeing him many times sitting in the gutter outside the cricket rooms after a day's play taking his shoes off. He would go in the dressing room and drink as much alcohol as he could after the game and go outside and sit in the gutter until someone came along to collect him.3

His drinking must have been of concern to those aware of it. From comments made later, at least some people involved with Gilbert, such as Crawford and Semple maintained that they were unaware of the drinking problems with the State team at this time although they surely must have heard some rumours.

Brisbane club cricketer at the time, Syd Redgrave jnr., could not recall any rumours about adverse behaviour by Gilbert:

I never heard anything about his drinking or any misconduct...around that period if anybody wasn't a nice type of fellow or did the wrong thing -- well, two or three people knew what happened while the rest of the world in Brisbane didn't know. He couldn't get in the side...there were 'rules.' If they had anything against you and you weren't a nice chap they wouldn't pick you in those days, you know -- well, this fellow was cheating in cards and this other fellow was a thief and there were one or two others that didn't go down with the 'heads'...The particular club or team didn't know and the world and Brisbane didn't know. I wasn't close to Eddie to hear any reasons although my Dad coached them. I never heard anything about Eddie at all. I was playing A Grade at the time and if there had been any rumours about Eddie at all I would have heard 'em. I never heard anything about his character or whether he drank or not...not to my knowledge and I think he was popular enough. When he was told to bowl properly he did.4

Quite obviously most people knew nothing of these 'stories' and the newspapers continued to report Gilbert as being a non-drinker and non-smoker and a shy, modest and religious young man. Throughout his career these types of non-threatening and 'acceptable' depictions always proved to be the most effective method of portraying Gilbert to a 'guarded' but fairly sympathetic

---

3 Clem Jones, personal information, 10 January 1992.
One newspaper report told how he was a handsome young man who was happily married "with a bride of his own race." The reporter who conducted the interview with him was to write that he was "Dressed smartly in a gray double-breasted suit, with a colored [sic] tie to match.".

Figure 7.1 Eddie Gilbert playing harmonica.

---

5 These types of depictions have varied little over time. An article about an Aboriginal Rugby League player who was trialling for the Gold Coast Rugby League team contained several examples of ‘selling’ a new talent. In one section it said:

"He was a tremendous club man for us, a very shy person although he has a great sense of humor [sic]. He doesn’t drink or smoke and he loves to train and play football." The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 26 December 1991: 62.

6 Smith’s Weekly, 14 February 1932: 3.

7 ibid.
The perception that 'blacks' were intellectually inferior to whites was unchanged over time. In an attempt to separate Gilbert from this prevailing stereotype a story was written about him. It was a version of a story often told about so called 'educated' Aborigines.

Eddie Gilbert, the Queensland aborigine, is of a better type mentally than most of his race, and is a fairly well educated man. A quiet, well-behaved chap, he takes an intelligent interest in what goes on around him.

One of the Queenslander [readers] last week told of a good story concerning Gilbert on a shopping expedition in Brisbane. The salesman, believing him to be as innocent as most aborigines, talked to him in pidgin English, Gilbert meanwhile saying very little. Having completed his purchases Gilbert picked up his parcels, and remarked in perfect English: "If there is anything else I want I will be in next time I come in," to the great embarrassment of the salesman.

During January 1934, a Q.C.A. Country team was selected to visit Lismore on Foundation Day, January the 26th. The secretary of the Country Committee (Mr. E.A. Shaw), sought to have Gilbert play, but it was declined on the basis that he was already committed to play for Murgon and District against Bundaberg on the same day. The appearance of Gilbert at Bundaberg was to be "the main attraction of the visiting team." The point was made by some that the Q.C.A. had relegated Gilbert to the background, allegedly on account of the leprosy scare, and that, in the circumstances, the local Association was entitled to his services.

The action of the Q.C.A. in not allowing Gilbert to play in Brisbane, and then taking such definite steps to obtain his services to go to Lismore, is considered to be very inconsistent.

Playing in the local competition Gilbert continued his good form. In a game against Murgon towards the end of January he took 4 for 8 in Murgon's first innings of 44. Barambah scored 136 in its innings of which Gilbert contributed 3 runs after coming in as second man. In their

---

9 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 12 January 1934: 6.
10 ibid.
second innings Murgon made 28, with Gilbert finishing with the astounding figures of 7 for 4.11

At the end of January he played for the Murgon and District team in a two-day match against a Bundaberg representative team at the West End Reserve, Bundaberg. The Murgon team was to be without three of its leading batsmen. Stibie batted soundly for Bundaberg, scoring 74 out of a total of 183. Walters, with 3 for 31, and Gilbert, with 2 for 45, were the best of the Murgon bowlers. Gilbert's bowling lacked its usual venom, although he sent down an occasional faster ball. The first few balls he bowled were well wide of the wicket as he was experiencing trouble with his spikes and had to leave the field for a time. At one stage Gilbert slipped when he was about to deliver the ball, and fell heavily, hurting his arm, but was undeterred. Murgon made 188 in reply. Fisher (43, not out), partnered first by Gilbert, and then by Walters, played an invaluable part in carrying Murgon's first innings total past Bundaberg's to ensure victory for the visitors. In their second innings Bundaberg declared at 5 for 116. Cooper, 31 and Tallon, 30 were the chief scorers for Bundaberg. Czisowski took 2 wickets for 25 and Gilbert 1 for 30. Kidd was out on Gilbert's second ball, "A perfect length ball, it took the top of the stump and was caught in slips."12 Murgon in their second innings were 5 for 93 at the end of play. Czisowski, not out 44, and Gilbert with 18, not out, were the best for the visitors.13

Gilbert, by his own standards, was even less successful when playing for Cherbourg in a match against a Toowoomba team at Toowoomba in early February. The match had been organised by the local Show Society in conjunction with the local Toowoomba Cricket Association.14 On this occasion he proved to be ineffective and did not take a wicket.

11 The South Burnett Times, 26 January 1934.
12 Bundaberg Daily Times, 29 January 1934: 3.
13 Bundaberg Daily News and Mail, 29 January 1934: 3.
14 Sports and Radio (Brisbane), 26 January 1934: 10.
Before the match The Toowoomba Chronicle and Darling Downs Gazette had written:

The long looked-forward-to and talked-of cricket match between Toowoomba’s strongest team and the Barambah aboriginal team (which includes Eddie Gilbert, easily the outstanding personality in the cricket world of Queensland to-day), will be staged on the Show Grounds to-day.15

When the truck transporting the Barambah players to the match stopped in a side street at Nanango to allow for a rest it was a cause of great interest to the locals. This ‘newsworthy’ event was duly reported in The Nanango News.16

The Toowoomba team gave a great showing against the visitors. The result was a draw, but at the end of the game Barambah were 116 runs behind Toowoomba with only four wickets in hand. Barambah won the toss and sent Toowoomba in to bat first. Toowoomba then set about compiling 191 for the loss of six wickets. Boag played a splendid innings of 62 (retired) and this was to be the highlight of the game. Cobbo was the most successful of the visiting bowlers with 3 for 51. Gilbert bowled at great speed but he only occasionally sent down a good ball and finished with no wicket for 39. At one stage he had only two men in front of the wicket, "the rest formed a strong slips cordon, and the wicketkeeper was about 12 yards back."17 A spectator at the match, Peter Clark, was to recall seeing Gilbert bowl:

I saw Eddie Gilbert play at the Showgrounds in Toowoomba. He was fast but he was fairly erratic. He took his arm back and then he let it fly - he was fast. The game was played on concrete I think. On one ball he tried to bowl a bouncer and the ball went over the batsmen’s head and over the wicket-keeper’s head and landed near the boundary.18

15 The Toowoomba Chronicle and Darling Downs Gazette, 10 February 1934: 9.
18 Peter Clark, personal information, 27 December 1990.
Figure 7.2 Gilbert with cousins and film producer.

Figure 7.3 Settlement inmates practising for a display.
The Cherbourg innings of 6 wickets down for 75 was a disappointing effort with the best performance with the bat being 38, not out, by J. Daylight, junior. The chief wicket-taker for Toowoomba was Herb Steinhurt, better known as a footballer, with the excellent figures of 5 for 17. Gilbert was cheered when he went out to bat and was 0 (not out) at the end of play.

As was usually the case when they travelled to play matches, some of the Cherbourg players entertained the crowd with an exhibition of boomerang and spear throwing. That night at the Showgrounds the players joined with other Aborigines from the settlement to stage a corroboree. Although these features of settlement life were of great interest to white people it has been claimed that they probably "only reinforced the prevailing stereotypes of the inmates as savages and primitives."19 The Toowoomba Chronicle and Darling Downs Gazette gave an outline of the display and described one of the favourite Cherbourg corroborees:

The next item was Catching the Alligator. One of the natives played the part of the monster by writhing along the ground on his stomach. The huntsmen came at him with spears, and after stalking their prey for a time succeeded in inflicting a mortal wound.20

During March the Cherbourg team played Goomeri in one of the local competition matches. Batting first, Goomeri were all disposed of for 19 runs, six of which were byes. No fewer than seven batsmen recorded the dreaded ‘duck.’ Gilbert proved to be the chief ‘destroyer,’ taking 6 wickets for 2 runs, off 5 overs, including a hat trick. Gilbert top-scored with 31 in Barambah’s total of 104 for 9. Goomeri in their second innings scored a slightly more respectable 77. Bourne scored 26 and Gilbert got 2 for 6 to bring his haul for the day to 8 for 8. The result of the game left the Cherbourg team "in an unassailable position for the Premiership of the Murgon

---


20 The Toowoomba Chronicle and Darling Downs Gazette, February 1934: 9.
and District Cricket Association.\textsuperscript{21}

Later in the year, on the 26th October 1934, at a local fixture match for the 1934-35 season, Murgon against Cherbourg, Gilbert took 6 for 7 in the first innings and 7 for 42 in the second innings. In taking 13 wickets in the match it was yet another effort which highlighted Gilbert's overwhelming superiority in local cricket. Despite his remarkable performances it was his achievements at state level that brought the greatest sense of pride to the settlement inmates.

The following week, playing for Murgon and District against Proston and District, he took 4 wickets for 42, three of them in the one over. Proston made 191 while Murgon compiled 233 for the loss of four wickets.\textsuperscript{22}

At the end of October it was reported that Gilbert "is likely to be nominated for the Country Week trials."\textsuperscript{23} Gilbert was reported as being in good form and as Queensland was without any fast bowlers of quality there was some hope that he might make the State team again.

The Sporting Globe was mildly sarcastic when it also reminded readers about the treatment of Gilbert in the leprosy 'affair' the year before:

> Gilbert was kind of ostracised last season because of a case of leprosy at the Aboriginal Settlement where he resides. Statistics show that several lepers were discovered in Brisbane last year, perhaps next door to men who played for Queensland, but no one objected.\textsuperscript{24}

The Country Week matches in November were to provide an opportunity for Gilbert to be given another trial by the Q.C.A. because he was "a drawcard and a personality of considerable

\textsuperscript{21} The Gympie Times, 15 March 1934: 3.

\textsuperscript{22} The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 1 November 1934: 4.

\textsuperscript{23} The Sporting Globe, 30 October 1934: 10.

\textsuperscript{24} ibid., 14 November 1934: 9.
There had been some suggestion that he had been injured in an accident but this was not the case. During the Country Week carnival Gilbert stayed with other country players at the Hotel Carlton.

The first match in the 1934 Country Week Carnival was South Queensland against North Queensland. South batted first and made 100 runs. Jerrard made 34 and Maddern 31. Graham took 2 for 26 but it was Gilbert who completely shattered the morale of the North Queensland batsmen when he ‘ripped’ through the batting line-up to finish with 7 wickets for 16 runs, off 12.6 overs, including 4 maidens.

Figure 7.4 Sports day on the settlement.

---

25 *Truth* (Brisbane), 18 November 1934.
L.H. Kearney, of *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), wrote:

Gilbert, who was not exploited in big cricket last season, was only a talked-of terror to many of the youthful Southerners, but when he commenced his sensational sequence of successes by clean bowling Boag in the first over of his second innings with the ball his terribling pace through the air and zip off the wet wicket became so demoralising that many of the dismissed batsmen never even sighted the ball which spreadeagled their wicket. While the batsmen were stampeded into a state of mental fog, the bowling of Gilbert was reminiscent of his sensational feats in Sheffield Shield cricket...

...Gilbert is definitely not as fast as he was in 1931-32, but he is much more hostile than he was in his last two Sheffield Shield games in 1932-33. He has regained his earlier accuracy and length, and is swinging the ball much more disconcertingly. One of the dismissed batsmen said yesterday that the ball which bowled him broke about nine inches. It probably never broke an inch, but the swing employed by Gilbert caused the ball to come across from outside the off stump to shatter the leg stump.

Gilbert opened the attack from the Vulture Street end, though fast, he was in no way intimidating, mainly because he appeared to centre on an off-theory attack, hoping that the batsmen would nibble at the ball. However, both Allen and Jerrard were cautious, and after bowling three overs (two maidens) for four runs, the Barambah express was temporarily rested. He came back to the bowling crease when the score was one for 18...and started his remarkable sequence of successes. He skittled the wickets of Boag and Brittle in the fourth and fifth overs, respectively. He bowled few loose balls, and relentlessly attacked the stumps.26

North Queensland batted and put together a total of 267 runs. Mahoney compiled 66. Gilbert made 5 before being caught out.

Tom Allen, fielding at cover, to batsman, E. Gilbert, brought off what looked like a catch. There was no appeal, but the Barambah man moved towards the pavilion under the impression that he was out. After walking a few yards he was waved back by Allen, who called out that he had caught the ball off the ground. Gilbert, by way of showing his appreciation of Allen's sporting action, skied the next ball, and Allen this time made no mistake.27

Wickets were shared by the South Queensland bowlers, with Walters being the best with 3 for 31.

---

26 *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 13 November 1934: 10.

27 *ibid.*, 14 November 1934: 8.
At their second turn at bat South Queensland were 5 for 160 at the end of play. Allen gave a fine display for 50. Clem took 3 for 26 while Gilbert remained wicketless with the bowling average of 0 for 25.

The wicket was easy-paced, and The Courier-Mail (Brisbane) was to report of Gilbert:

"It was noticeable that he nursed his bowling arm at times, and only bowled at half pace, while the fact that he was used so sparingly indicates that he has not completely freed himself from the shoulder strain, which interfered with his career on several previous occasions. Monday's remarkable bowling effort evidently overtaxed the Barambah express, and this, together with the unresponsive nature of the wicket, caused him not only to lose his pace, but his swing and hostility off the pitch."28

North Queensland ended up winning the match by 167 runs on the first innings.

In the next match, against Metropolitan Colts, only 2 hours' play was possible after a late start and the later abandonment of play due to "a storm breaking over the ground"29 in mid-afternoon, submerging the playing field. At the end of the day's play Colts had scored 118 for the loss of 2 wickets. Wearing the boots of the country secretary (Mr. E. Shaw), Gilbert opened the bowling. Coats played Gilbert's bowling with confidence and produced a good display for his 68, not out. The 2 wickets to fall were taken by Clem at the cost of 44 runs. The easy pace of the pitch "did not suit Gilbert's customary fiery attack, and, while he occasionally made the ball fly, only the short-pitched deliveries rose head high."30 According to The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), the abandoning of the match "has left us somewhat in the dark regarding the capabilities of the country men."31

28 ibid.

29 ibid., 15 November 1934: 10.

30 ibid.

31 ibid.
In a rather premature assessment of Gilbert’s performances during the Carnival, Kearney, of The Courier-Mail (Brisbane) was to suggest:

Gilbert performed remarkably well on the wet wicket on Monday, but the later easy-paced wickets found him wanting in those hostile qualities which first won him a place in the Queensland side. Unless he can come out of the final trial match with a distinction performance, I cannot see his lone country week performance taking him into the State side.\(^\text{32}\)

The next game was the regular Country versus Metropolis clash. It was suggested that Gilbert was saving himself "for a supreme effort against the Metropolis."\(^\text{33}\) Country won the game by 24 runs on the first innings after Metropolis batted first and made 119. O’Connor was top-scorer with an invaluable 33. Clem and Allen took 3 wickets apiece but it was Gilbert who had the best bowling results. He "wisely discarded his pace for the occasion, and bowling at half strength troubled the earlier Metropolitan batsmen."\(^\text{34}\) At one stage he had four for 20, but he had no further success and his final figures were four for 39 runs, off 12 overs. Three of his victims fell to catches close to the wicket.

Country replied with 143. Boag returned to form to make a good 71. Metropolis bowler O’Connor took 5 for 34, off 17 overs with "clever flighting and changes of pace."\(^\text{35}\) Metropolis in their second innings made 5 declared for 189. Hansen, in scoring 96, not out, gave "as nice a display as he has ever given."\(^\text{36}\) Tallon was next best with the bat in making 24. Gilbert had the best bowling figures of 2 wickets for 23, off 13 overs. In Gilbert’s dismissal of Andrews,
who he had also dismissed in the first innings, "he clean beat the batsman to take the off bail." In Country's second innings they made 1 for 141 after a great 58, not out, by Maddern and an entertaining 61, not out, by Turlich. Amos took the only wicket to fall at a cost of 41 runs.

Despite some adverse comments during the week, by the end of the week newspaper reports generally referred to Gilbert's sensational Country Week carnival efforts.

The aborigine has lost little of his speed. He does not look extra pacey when he bowls at the wicket. It is when he lets himself go, and fires them down, with little regard to length and direction, that he looks fastest.

In the middle of November 1934, and despite the fact that Cherbourg was quarantined due to a measles outbreak, Gilbert and two of his cousins were photographed in Brisbane with a film producer. Gilbert and his cousins wore white cricket gear and held a number of spears each. The reason for the filming or any resulting film has not been found.

In discussions about the State team Gilbert was to be depicted as inconsistent and a bowler of 'moods.' Despite his fine bowling in Country Week he was not included in the State team to play South Australia. Queensland gave their supporters a 'heartening' start to the Shield season by winning this game by 3 wickets and 1 run.

In early December, Gilbert played for Murgon and District in one of the regular representative matches against Gympie, at Gympie. With a wicket favouring the batsmen, Gympie gained a first innings victory. Gympie made 195 in their first innings. Shepherd scored a fine 91 for his team while Gilbert, with much spectator interest in his performance, took 3 for 42. He bowled an occasional fast ball but mostly bowled at medium pace. Murgon replied with

---

37 ibid.
38 ibid.
39 Eddie Gilbert, photograph file, John Oxley Library.
40 ibid.
169 of which Gilbert made 30, not out. Gympie then made 163 for the loss of 6 wickets.

Gilbert took 1 wicket at a cost of 20 runs. Murgon batted a second time and were all out for 111 runs. Zeth provided the most resistance in scoring 23.41

The Gympie Truth reported on Gilbert’s performance:

Eddie Gilbert, the Murgon bowler, was the principal attraction on the visitors’ side, but the trundler with less than his strong pace, and was only moderately successful in wicket-getting, securing an aggregate of 4 for 62 (three of them with four successive balls), in comparison with his 12 for 53 on Murgon’s visit to Gympie last year.42

It was a time of some uncertainty for Gilbert with regard to the possibility of a resumed first-class career. He proved to be ‘restless and unsettled.’ During December Gilbert was picked to play for the Cherbourg Settlement Cricket team against Manumbar but was bribed not to play and got drunk. Other players were offered bribes but would not accept. When later questioned Gilbert refused to inform on the person who provided him with the alcohol. His behaviour was reported to the white administration by various members of his cricket team and the event was to cause a great deal of alarm being expressed by settlement officials.43

---

41 The Gympie Times, 6 December 1934.

42 The Gympie Truth, 3 December 1934: 3.

43 Eddie Gilbert, personal file information, op.cit., 10 and 15 January 1935.
After the incident Superintendent Semple sent a letter to the secretary of the Manumbar Cricket Club.

Dear Sir[,]  

When your team was here recently playing against the Settlement team in the Association fixtures, either members of your team or visitors from Manumbar tried to bribe some of the Cherbourg players by offers of beer and rum, and even offered money if the players would give their wickets away, and let your team win the match.

This is a most serious accusation to be made against you and the consequences most grave.

In future should your team play on Settlement grounds only players of your team will be admitted and under no circumstances whatever will visitors from Manumbar or elsewhere be admitted to witness the match. It is probable on further investigation that you may again hear from me with a view to prosecuting those who gave drink to members of team or to natives on the Settlement.

Yours faithfully
(Initials)
Superintendent.  

For his misbehaviour over the Manumbar match Gilbert was given 2 weeks imprisonment, "but this was reduced to seven days, making him work all day and locking him up at night."  

Gilbert was described by Semple as "a loafer and a waster" and it was resolved by the Settlement Cricket Club that he would not play again in the season, "nor will he be allowed to play for any of the association fixtures."  

Possibly due to a combination of anxieties about his career, his experiences, and various temptations on the settlement, there was a breakdown in Gilbert's earlier religious and moral

---

44 ibid.

45 ibid., memorandum 34/5948 Sport.

46 ibid., letter dated 8 January 1935.

47 ibid.
beliefs. This process had taken place over a number of years but was almost complete by this time. According to inmate, Vince Bunda, Gilbert became quite a ‘ladies’ man on the settlement with “women running after him”\(^{48}\) because he was seen as good-looking and famous -- a great hero. In defence of his actions Bunda has suggested that “Eddie would have been a fool to knock it back wouldn’t he…it’s better than masturbating.”\(^{49}\) In addition to his drinking Eddie found himself in trouble with other inmates over his ‘lady chasing’ activities. At one time he had a fight “using nulla sticks with another man over a woman and that Eddie Gilbert had won.”\(^{50}\) There may have been other fights as well. As an outcome of this type of behaviour Eddie’s wife had separated from him. On the settlement, and away from the wider white society, Gilbert was perceived as a different person than their impressions of him. Needless to say the occurrences in his private life must surely have had some affect on his cricket practice and performances and this may have been made known to the relevant cricket officials.

While these events were taking place considerations for the state team were being made. When the Queensland team to undertake the Southern tour was announced Gilbert was not in it although he was told to be ready for an emergency. Without any detailed investigation of any other possible reasons The Sporting Globe said: “His omission appears to be due to one of two reasons - a decision to drop him for big cricket, or a fear that he would be no-balled, as he was on a previous trip.”\(^{51}\)

---


\(^{49}\) ibid.

\(^{50}\) ibid.

\(^{51}\) The Sporting Globe, 12 December 1934: 8.
Although Gilbert was overlooked for the Southern Tour one of his relatives, May McBride, believed they knew how he would react:

He just accepted it. He wasn’t a bragger either. He’d never say I this and I that. He’d just be real quiet. He had them funny old ways, you know, those tribal ways.\(^2\)

The non-inclusion of Gilbert in the touring Queensland team was greeted with surprise by some but with a great deal of indignation by Superintendent Semple at Cherbourg. A newspaper article outlined ‘definite’ comments which Superintendent Semple was to later suggest he did not want reported:

He said that Gilbert should have been taken south, but if other bowlers fail they will want him to play. "I am not keen on his participation in any play in Shield matches this season; however, but no decision will be made until Gilbert is selected. The Aborigine still plays with the Cherbourg team and his performance in local competitions has been up to the standard."\(^3\)

Semple was also reported as stating that "the committee wouldn’t give the black a trip to the southern capitals but was eager to grab his services when they cost little."\(^4\) Another report suggested that Semple’s action was not due to resentment at the fact that Gilbert was not chosen for the southern tour, "but for an entirely different reason."\(^5\) This reason was not made public but Superintendent Semple had notified Mr. Shaw, secretary of the Queensland Country Week Advisory Committee that "Gilbert would not be allowed to play...as Gilbert had misbehaved."\(^6\)

---


\(^3\) The Gympie Times, 1 January 1935: 5.


\(^6\) Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit, memorandum 34/5948 Sport. This misbehaviour was at the Manumbar cricket match although Shaw was not told this. Mr. Shaw was also a newspaper reporter who wrote an article about Semple’s objections to Gilbert’s treatment by the Q.C.A.
The Bulletin, in reporting the 'problem,' reminded readers of the prevalent view existing about Aborigines when it suggested that, "If players have no scruples about travelling with an aboriginal, plenty of the public object to his dining in the same rooms at hotels."57

The whole situation of the non-selection of Gilbert was inflamed even more when the Q.C.A. refused to pay a clothing allowance account for clothes worn by Gilbert.58 When there was a suggestion that he would be recalled to the State team, The Sporting Globe wrote:

Should Gilbert be selected there is no certainty that Mr Semple, who is in charge of Cherbourg (Barambah) Aboriginal Mission Station, will agree to his playing. Quite recently he expressed his great disappointment that Gilbert had not been taken south with the State side, and added that it was his desire that Gilbert should not play again this season. It will be interesting to see what will happen if the Queensland selectors seek his services.

The Queensland Cricket Association has acted peculiarly in the Gilbert matter.59 The general feeling was that Semple had made his point and "will be prevailed upon to withdraw his objection."60 On the 8th of January the Q.C.A. advised Semple that Gilbert had been chosen to play for Queensland against the southern states in Brisbane. Semple advised them that Gilbert was definitely unavailable. The Q.C.A. discussed the matter and sought to have him made available. They approached "the Minister controlling the Aboriginal Department, with the result that Gilbert was given permission to play."61

---

58 Eddie Gilbert, personal file information, Queensland Department of Community Services, 1988. Restricted access.
59 The Sporting Globe, 8 January 1935: 8.
60 Sydney Morning Herald, 9 January 1935: 15.
When compared to the involvement of the Chief Protector the office of the Home Secretary had little real input into day-to-day operations of Aboriginal affairs. However, as a result of representations by the Q.C.A. to the Department, a memorandum to Semple was forthcoming from the Acting Home Secretary.

MEMO.

RE ABORIGINAL CRICKETER E. GILBERT

Mr. O’Leary, Deputy Chief Protector of Aboriginals, phoned regarding a statement in the Press that Mr. Semple, Superintendent of Cherbourg Aboriginal Settlement, would definitely prohibit Gilbert from playing in an Interstate Cricket team if picked by the Queensland Selectors owing to the fact that he was not selected for some previous match.

Mr. O’Leary understands that representations are to be made by the Cricket Association requesting that Gilbert be permitted to play and in case such representations are made to this Office the Acting Minister, desires it to be known that he is absolutely opposed to Mr. Semple’s views and so long as the Association are responsible for all Gilbert’s expenses, fares, wages, clothing &c. considers no obstacle should be placed in the way of his playing with the Queensland team.62

The Acting Home Secretary (Mr. F.A. Casper) agreed with Mr. O’Leary and the memo was forwarded to Superintendent Semple "in the event that you [O’Leary] may be approached by the Q.C.A."63

Superintendent Semple was clearly unimpressed with the decision to overrule him. When The Nanango News telephoned him for a comment on the position of Gilbert and State cricket his curt reply was: "I am not going to give it to you."64

---

62 Eddie Gilbert, personal file information, op.cit., 1935.

63 ibid. Mr. O’Leary saw Mr. Casper who “instructed that Gilbert is to be allowed to play if he so desires on the terms mentioned.”

64 The Nanango News, 10 January 1935.
The memorandum outlined above was followed up by a very blunt letter from O'Leary to Superintendent Semple. It said in part:

If the remarks appearing in the paper as having been made by you are correct, please advise your reasons for conveying your opinions to a Newspaper without reference to this office and without the permission, which it is necessary for all Government Officials to receive before supplying any information to the Press.

If Gilbert refuses to play he is required to present to this office through you a written statement giving his reasons for such as the impression is now being held in Brisbane that there is a possibility of his being induced by Settlement officials to refrain from taking his place in the team.

While you are entitled to your opinion on the Selectors' Officials in omitting him from the Queensland team which recently visited the Southern States, you are not justified in refusing to allow Gilbert to join the team if he so desires.\

The opinion of the Acting Home Secretary was that Gilbert had expiated his crime in being imprisoned for his misbehaviour at Manumbar. Quite clearly there is evidence of a vast difference between actual governmental regulations and the manner in which they are administered.

In reply to his reprimand and instructions Semple outlined in a memorandum to the Chief Protector the events surrounding the reporting of his opinion and other relevant aspects. Although he did not think his comments would be reported he defended himself by suggesting: "I was giving away no State matters or Official secrets [and] I could see no harm in what I said." He went on further to suggest:

65 Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit. The action of O'Leary was supported by the Minister.

66 ibid.
During the past seasons I have been fightingly supporting Gilbert to attend these matches, in financing him and giving him lessons and instructions how to behave, there is no prejudice on my part that I personally do not want him to attend these matches. It is only as a punishment for his past behaviour.

I saw Gilbert this morning and asked him if he would play if selected. He said yes, that he would play with the Queensland team. He expressed at the same time a wish, that I would overlook his past misbehaviour and be allowed to play in the forthcoming matches. Here I advised him that I would place his request and apology before the committee.67

The contents of Semple's correspondence were considered and it was ruled that Gilbert could play. In an interesting and revealing letter Semple was notified about arrangements for Gilbert.

As advised by telegram he should leave Monday night the 14th instant and on arrival in Brisbane on Tuesday morning proceed direct to the Carlton Hotel. He can then call at this office 9 o'clock where it is expressly desired to inform him that it is expected that his conduct will be satisfactory while he is in Brisbane.

Please advise Gilbert prior to his departure that under no circumstances is he to answer any questions put to him by members of the Press or other persons, concerning recent incidents at Cherbourg. The Queensland Cricket Association are endeavouring to arrange with the Press to refrain from questioning Gilbert in any way.

The Secretary, Q.C.A., advised that at the request of this Department clothing to the value of £10.5.0 was supplied to Gilbert prior to his proceeding to Brisbane for Country Week cricket. When supply was made it was intended that this clothing should also be used by him if he were selected for any Shield games. Consequently it is understood that he is fully equipped for this visit.68

On their return from the Southern tour in January 1935 the Queensland team stopped at Grafton and played a game against a Clarence River District team. Local people believed that Gilbert was in the Queensland team. Although the match was drawn and Gilbert did not play he created some interest, courtesy of team member Charlie Andrews. Syd Redgrave jnr., recalled:

67 ibid.

68 ibid., letter 12 January 1935.
Charlie Andrews played with him [Gilbert] and never had a bad word to say against him. Charlie Andrews had a bit of ‘colour’ in him and he might have been a bit smaller than Eddie Gilbert and one day Queensland – they were either going south to play or coming home and they stopped on the other side of the border and played the local team and Eddie Gilbert did not play that particular match. But Charlie...he bowled three overs and I don’t think Charlie bowled anything at all. He was a medium-paced bowler if anything at all...and they [spectators] were saying: "Why don’t you bowl fast? Let’s see how fast you bowl."

After the Southern tour of the Queensland Shield team Gilbert was selected to play in the state team against Victoria and accepted the invitation. He replaced O’Connor, "who bowled well at times on the recent southern tour but, was hardly a success."

L.H. Keamey, writing in The Courier-Mail (Brisbane) before the start of the Shield match in the latter part of January, indicated his belief that Gilbert should be ‘nursed’ and that he had "lost a lot of that ‘devil’ which characterised his bowling when he dismissed Bradman and Bill for ‘ducks’." Despite the match result Keamey need not have worried about Gilbert’s performance.

Victoria gained an easy victory by 10 wickets in just less than two-and-a-half days’ play in ‘perfect’ weather conditions. Queensland won the toss and batted, and the whole side were out for 114. Sides played good cricket for his top-score of 29.

---


71 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 18 January 1935: 9.
'Third Man,' of The Telegraph (Brisbane), had a 'story' to relate about Gilbert and his batting:

I feel quite certain that on Friday when Eddie Gilbert went in to bat to the accompaniment of prolonged applause, Fleetwood-Smith murmured to himself, "Well, my boy, if you're the favourite with the crowd here, I'll give you one to break your 'duck.'" And he did - a full toss outside the off stump. But he didn't forget to whip the next one down on the middle stump, and it was almost all up with friend Eddie.72

Gilbert provided the crowd with some fun and acrobatics before McCormack clean bowled him for 6. During his innings he was struck two nasty blows by McCormack and required ambulance attention. "One [delivery] struck him below the heart and dropped him to the ground. The other split a finger on his left hand."73 Fleetwood-Smith proved to be far too 'clever' for most of the Queensland batsmen and he finished with figures of 5 for 39, off 13 overs.

The Victorian total of 290 rested heavily on the batting success of Darling, who made 147, and Sievers, who played well in making 58. Darling, after a piece of early luck, played "a most brilliant, punishing innings"74 and dominated all the bowlers. Gilbert provided "his usual first over sensation when he dismissed Rigg before he had scored."75

O'Brien scored one off the first ball with a cut fielded on the boundary. Rigg survived a few balls, and then, in an attempt to hit the ball to short leg, skied it, and Tallon, diving, took a good catch an inch off the ground.76

This particular effort "roused the crowd to demonstrate enthusiasm."77

72 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 22 January 1935: 13.
74 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 21 January 1935: 8.
76 The Herald (Melbourne), 18 January 1935: 3.
77 The Referee, 24 January 1935: 12.
'Queenslander,' writing for *The Referee*, considered his first four overs as "the fastest yet seen from him."\(^{78}\) He bowled with terrific speed and could have achieved better results than his 5 for 77 "had the field been properly placed on the leg side."\(^{79}\) There was no doubt that Gilbert's bowling unsettled several of the Victorian batsmen and only Darling and Sievers played him with any confidence. Gilbert, who was making the ball 'fly,' appeared to 'rattle' O'Brien, who after stopping a vicious 'flier' on the shoulder, ducked his head in the way of a very quick delivery.

It was a terrific crack, the impact of the ball on the back of O'Briens' head resounding all over the ground. O'Brien dropped his bat and staggered away from the wicket in a semi-dazed condition. He was immediately assisted to the pavilion by his colleagues and Christie.\(^{80}\)

O'Brien spent the night in hospital. An X-ray examination showed there was no fracture, "although an effusion of blood had occurred under the skull."\(^{81}\) He returned to the ground the next day but took no further part in the game.

In addition to the descriptions about Gilbert being able to make the ball 'fly' there were reports about his ability to keep the ball low. This was outlined by *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane):

Queenslanders know that Gilbert's full length express ball that keeps low has taken good wickets in Brisbane, through its baffling pace...Rigg and Darling were batting. Gilbert sent Rigg down a daisy for pace which missed the off stump by a fraction of an inch, and rose not more than two inches. Rigg walked down the pitch and asked Darling: "Did you see that one. I didn't?" Darling saw the ball, and told Rigg all about it.\(^{82}\)

---

\(^{78}\) ibid., 10.


\(^{80}\) *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 19 January 1935: 8.

\(^{81}\) *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 January 1935: 10.

\(^{82}\) *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 6 January 1936: 7. Based on match reports Rigg and Darling did not bat together. Despite this 'oversight' the article made the point it sought to make.
Glorious weather favoured the resumption of play on the second day and more than 1000 spectators were present when Gilbert bowled the first ball to Darling, who scored a single from it.

Gilbert had not been hostile early but when he was brought on to bowl with the score at 73 the real sensations began. The Telegraph (Brisbane) was to outline his bowling stint:

Gilbert, with two wickets for 73, was brought on at the pavilion end and really startled himself by taking McCormack's middle stump. This success seemed to go to Gilbert's head for thereafter he bowled like a demon. His pace was faster at this point than at any time earlier in the day. In quick succession Gilbert rattled down the wickets of Barnett and Fleetwood-Smith.33

Gilbert bowled at terrific pace on a perfect wicket which should have favoured the batsmen. His performance was outlined by the Sydney Morning Herald:

The routing of the Victorian "tail" by the Queensland aboriginal fast bowler, Eddie Gilbert, provided a highlight. Gilbert probably bowled faster than ever before, and in his last sensational over bowled Barnett, McCormick, [sic] and Fleetwood-Smith at a cost of four runs off seven balls. Gilbert is popular with Queensland crowds, and the six thousand odd people who paid £426 on Saturday were frantic with delight. As he returned with his team he was given an ovation.84

Figure 7.5 Eddie Gilbert batting.

83 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 22 January 1935: 13.
As well as the great ovation Gilbert received from the crowd his team-mates, in recognition of his excellent fast bowling performance, "made a nice gesture in forcing Eddie to return to the pavilion ahead of them."\(^85\)

Other Queensland bowlers to take wickets were Christy (2 for 30), Bensted (1 for 46), and Oxenham (1 for 53). The Queensland fielding lacked the "snap and class of the visitors"\(^85\) but Tallon was ‘smart’ behind the stumps.

Victoria secured a lead of 176 runs on the first innings. Queensland were sent in again and gave yet another ‘depressing’ batting performance to make only 186 in the second innings. A splendid fighting innings of 61 by Bensted "enabled Queensland to avert an innings defeat."\(^87\) Andrews looked in good form in his 36. Gilbert came in to face a hat-trick and although he prevented it he was soon bowled by Ebeling for none. Chief ‘destroyer’ of Queensland was once again Fleetwood-Smith who, with a magnificent performance, took 6 for 90, off 28 overs.

Victoria needed only 10 runs in their second innings for victory and a big lead in the Sheffield Shield competition. Their win in this match was achieved without the loss of a wicket. The small crowd had called for Gilbert, who had bowled with great pace in the first innings, to be bowled, but the Queensland captain evidently wished to end the game quickly and had used Andrews at the other end.\(^88\)

It was a great return to the state team for Gilbert. However, it was marred somewhat by certain actions which began on the second day of the match when "it was unofficially learned

\(^85\) The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 21 January 1935: 8.
\(^86\) The Referee, 24 January 1935: 10.
\(^87\) The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 22 January 1935: 10.
\(^88\) ibid.
during luncheon that the Victorians were murmuring objections to the aboriginal’s deliveries.\textsuperscript{89}

These rumours grew in persistency during the game. The Telegraph (Sydney) highlighted this disquiet with the headline: ‘EDDIE GILBERT AGAIN CRICKET STORM-CENTRE - Does He Throw?’,\textsuperscript{90} The Sydney Morning Herald reported:

> Although no official protest was made, it was no secret that the Victorians were resentful over Gilbert’s bowling style, declaring it a throw, and it is known that they expressed themselves to that effect to the Queensland captain and other home players.\textsuperscript{91}

Rumours circulated about an impending formal protest by Victoria, but this did not result. The chairman of the Q.C.A. (Mr. J.S. Hutcheon) declared that, "there had been no written communication from the Victorian team to the Q.C.A. regarding Gilbert’s bowling."\textsuperscript{92} This comment indicated that someone "other than the manager may have complained to some Queensland official, though not in writing."\textsuperscript{93} At least one opinion suggested that the Victorian players were "sufficiently good sportsmen to keep silence."\textsuperscript{94} The Victorian captain, Ebeling, "flatly refused to discuss the matter."\textsuperscript{95} Meanwhile, the Victorian manager (Mr Rush) pointed out that complaints would have to go through him, "and he could say with certainty that no complaint had been lodged."\textsuperscript{96} Asked if the members of the team considered the bowling fair,

\textsuperscript{89} The Herald (Melbourne), 19 January 1935: 4.

\textsuperscript{90} The Telegraph (Sydney), 21 January 1935: 3.

\textsuperscript{91} Sydney Morning Herald, 21 January 1935: 10.

\textsuperscript{92} The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 21 January 1935: 12.

\textsuperscript{93} The North Queensland Register, 26 January 1935: 83.

\textsuperscript{94} The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 21 January, 1935: 12.

\textsuperscript{95} ibid.

\textsuperscript{96} ibid.
Rush replied: "I have not questioned them, but they accept the decision of the umpires."97

Mr. Rush had not decided whether any reference to Gilbert's bowling would be included in his report and chose to 'discuss' the matter with the captain and vice-captain, despite the players clearly having no doubt that Gilbert threw the ball. There was some suggestion that there would be condemnation of Gilbert's fast bowling in the Victorian Manager's report.98

It is likely that the report on incidents in the match will be made to the Victorian Cricket Association, which may decide to approach the Queensland Cricket Association with the object of ensuring that if Gilbert bowls again in Sheffield cricket, steps will be taken to ensure that the rule banning throwing is properly observed by umpires in Queensland.99

Rush later chose to omit any reference to Gilbert's bowling in his report to the Victorian Cricket Association. "The fact that umpires passed Gilbert's bowling has proved the determining factor."100 Meanwhile, the umpires stuck to their view that Gilbert bowled fairly.

The Victorian players were "by no means in sympathy with Brisbane's opinion as to Gilbert's bowling"101 and had their own, 'southern states' view. Although members of the Victorian team considered that Gilbert threw at times in the match, "generally they regarded his bowling as a subject of mirth rather than indignation."102

The Telegraph (Brisbane) printed a comment by Mr. A.L. Rose, former manager of the New South Wales cricket team. It showed that the question of Gilbert's bowling was never fully resolved. In discussing the fairness of Gilbert's delivery a still unrepentant Rose stated: "I retract

97 ibid.
98 ibid.
99 The North Queensland Register, 2 February 1935: 86.
100 ibid., 9 February 1935: 87.
101 The Referee, 7 February 1935: 15.
102 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 5 February 1935: 5.
nothing of what I said in 1931."\(^{103}\)

The article made a review of Rose's claims, including the suggestion that the Queensland players "also admitted to us in 1931 that Gilbert threw."\(^{104}\) These comments reinforced a view that was held by some that the questioning of Gilbert's delivery was still a matter of concern to cricket generally and needed to be finalised. *The Referee*, in its discussion of Gilbert's latest woes, made a 'significant' point:

> If there was no question about the fairness of Gilbert's delivery of the fastest ball, and he could keep up his pace reasonably, he might become a force in Test cricket. His best pace, however, does not last long.

It is fair to Gilbert to emphasise that Brisbane umpires pass his deliveries.\(^{105}\)

Towards the end of January 1935, Gilbert played for the Queensland County team in two matches in northern New South Wales. The first of these matches was played against Byron Bay-Mullumbimby at Byron Bay on the 27th of January.

The Queensland Country team defeated a combined Byron Bay-Mullumbimby team by 24 runs on the first innings. Queensland Country batted first and Allen scored 46 of the team's total of 129. Byron Bay-Mullumbimby bowler Wright bowled slow leg breaks and "puzzled most of the visitors, securing 5 for 31."\(^{106}\) Byron Bay-Mullumbimby made a total of 105. The only player to show up to any extent was Baille, who made 47. Almost unbelievably sundries totalled 22. Gilbert bowled at three-quarter pace, and took 4 for 17, off 8 overs, while Clem captured 6 wickets for 48 runs. Queensland Country made 69 for 6 declared in their second innings. Allen compiled 21 runs for the visitors and Wright, bowling for the home side, completed a fine match.

\(^{103}\) *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 22 January 1935: 14.

\(^{104}\) Ibid.


with 4 wickets for 39 in this innings. In Byron Bay-Mullumbimby's second turn at bat they were
5 for 36, with Halpin 11, not out. Gilbert secured 2 wickets for 5 and Allen had 2 for 27.107

The next match saw the Queensland Country team defeat the Lismore team by an innings and 98 runs. In Lismore's first innings total of 25 no player reached double figures and 6
batsmen did not record a score. Clem, the Queensland Country left-hand bowler, recorded the
sensational figures of 6 wickets for 8 runs, off 5.1 overs. Gilbert, who "seldom bowled at more
than three-quarter pace,"108 had to be content with 2 wickets for 6, while Baldwin secured 2 for
8. Quite surprisingly, Gilbert was no-balled by the square-leg umpire, "who considered he had
thrown."109 Queensland Country scored 162 in their turn at bat. Waddell top-scored with 34,
not out. Gilbert was bowled by O'Connor for a 'duck.' Best bowling figures for Lismore were
3 for 37 by O'Connor and 3 for 42 by Rummery. In Lismore's second innings of 39 the
'top-score' was sundries, which totalled 13, while Ellis made 7 runs. Two batsmen did not
trouble the scorers (no score) and 5 others scored 1 run apiece. Clem demolished the Lismore
innings and took 5 for 18 and Gilbert secured 3 wickets for 2.

After his performance against the Victorians Gilbert was expected to bowl well against
New South Wales in the next Shield match, and so it was to prove. There was a renewed interest
in Gilbert's action because of the views of some who thought that, "in his early stages at times he
does not regularly conform with the law."110

While Eddie Gilbert was to be on the cricket scene there was always going to be some
comment about his bowling action. This is shown by a contributed article which appeared in The

107 ibid.


109 ibid; Also in The Referee, 7 February 1935: 15.

110 The Sporting Globe, 14 February 1935: 16.
Sporting Globe and which contained some evidence of racial stereotyping:

It is distinctly understood by the rules of cricket that to jerk the wrist or arm when bowling is a warrant for the umpire’s call of “No ball.” A close study of the slow-motion pictures of Gilbert in action raises the question as to whether he does really throw, or merely adds to the pace of the ball by a peculiar motion of the hand and wrist at the moment the ball leaves his fingers...There is no doubt that while bowling at cricket Gilbert unknowingly and therefore unlawfully, gives impetus to the ball by repeating a custom which is a part of his education. Umpire A.N. Barlow was therefore neither prejudiced nor wrong in his decisions in no-balling Gilbert because, as the slow motion pictures show there is an unmistakable bending back of the bowler’s wrist and a consequent “jerk” as the ball is sent away.111

Although the New South Wales match was the last match of the season, this was to be the first match that Gilbert would play against New South Wales since the ‘Bradman incident’ of 1931. This time though there would be no Bradman in the visiting team. The Queensland team were after an outright win to finish in its highest position ever in Sheffield Shield cricket, while New South Wales wanted an outright win to save some face in its poorest Shield season for years.

Jack Fingleton, of The Telegraph (Sydney), was to write in his match preview.

Gilbert rarely fails to turn on the fireworks in Brisbane, and I think it no exaggeration to claim that to the Brisbane people there is no greater crowd-drawer than Gilbert.

Bradman would be Gilbert’s only rival, but Bradman has so often trampled the flower of Queensland cricket underfoot that I feel sure Gilbert appeals more to their susceptibilities. The Brisbane Gilbert is in no sense comparable to the Gilbert who has been seen in southern cities on occasions.

...Gilbert’s face peers out from many newspaper angles to-night, and it does seem that there might be something startling to-morrow.112

111 The Sporting Globe, 12 December 1934: 8.
112 The Telegraph (Sydney), 15 February 1935: 3.
Figure 7.6 Victims of Gilbert's bowling.
Len Allen, friend and mentor of Gilbert in the early part of his career, and former secretary of the Q.C.A. country committee, attended the match and renewed acquaintances with Eddie Gilbert. Allen was 'enjoying' a holiday away from "the dry heat and dust of his home at Charleville in western Queensland where he now lived."\(^{113}\)

New South Wales batted first and made 233 runs. Features of the play were to be Gilbert's sensational bowling and sound batting by Fingleton (74), Chipperfield (63), and Marks (56). Apart from Gilbert's 'bolt from the blue' bowling, there was no particular hostility in the Queensland attack. Gilbert's magnificent bowling performance resulted in 6 wickets for 64, off 16 overs. With some rare exceptions, he was generally considered to be not as fast as he was against Victoria. Oxenham finished with 2 for 46.

L.H. Kearney, of The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), enthused about Gilbert's performance with the headline: 'SUPERB BOWLING BY GILBERT.'

Gilbert has performed many sensational bowling feats for Queensland in Sheffield Shield cricket, but it is doubtful if he has ever shown greater accuracy and hostility than that which characterised his performance in capturing the wickets of Little, Robinson, Marks, Chipperfield, White, and Ryan for 64 runs. Levy handled Gilbert admirably, and never let the opposition get the measure of his bowling.\(^{114}\)

In his wickets Gilbert dismissed Little and Robinson before they had scored; caught and bowled Marks after he had scored 56; and bowled White for 12. After the wicket of Robinson, caught behind by Tallon, Gilbert "a quiet, peaceful, and slight figure grinned delightedly, and twirled his arm around with rare gusto."\(^{115}\) The Queensland fielding was the best seen in their home matches. Tallon was quick and sure behind the stumps, and Gilbert, "usually indifferent in the

\(^{113}\) The Telegraph (Brisbane), 16 February 1935: 10.

\(^{114}\) The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 15 February 1935: 10.

\(^{115}\) The Telegraph (Sydney), 16 February 1935: 3.
field, excelled himself."

The Queensland first innings total was 261. Left-handers Sides (68) and Hansen (63) batted soundly. Tallon "showed the best form of the innings" in his 40. Gilbert was given a thunderous reception when he went out to bat but was bowled by Chilvers for 1. Chilvers (4 for 68) finished with the best bowling figures, "but did not look as good as his figures."  

Figure 7.7 'In Deadly Mood' - Gilbert bowling against New South Wales.

\footnote{ibid.}

\footnote{The Referee, 21 February 1935: 17.}

\footnote{ibid.}
Gilbert yet again lived up to his reputation for providing early sensations in the New South Wales second innings by taking the wickets of Brown and Little "with successive balls in his third over." The ball that got Little "whipped through, keeping low, and dead on the wicket" to take his off stump. A highlight of New South Wales' second innings total of 337 was the fine 107 scored by Marks, his first century in Shield cricket. Chipperfield played a first-class innings for his 69 and Robinson made 67 before he was bowled. With the exception of Gilbert, the Queensland attack was weak. Gilbert (3 for 114) bowled throughout the match without raising the ire of the umpires and the New South Welshmen were satisfied. However, he did not prove to be as effective as he was in the first innings. 'Queenslander,' writing for The Referee, believed: "Some of Gilbert's deliveries were again open to question in this match." Wyeth was next best bowler after Gilbert with 3 for 48. Tallon took 3 good catches behind the stumps.

Jack Fingleton, playing in the match for N.S.W., and writing for The Telegraph (Sydney), said:

Eddie is the darling of the Queensland crowd, and his every movement in the field is greeted with roars of approval. But I am afraid that to us Eddie, to put it crudely, is just a pain in the neck.

Just when we had wiped out Queensland's first innings lead on Saturday Eddie came on the scene and proceeded to wipe us out. Bill Brown, who was batting splendidly, went for a pull shot and hit the ball into his wicket.

That was one wicket to Eddie, as anybody within several miles of the ground would well have known, for it is worth the trip to Brisbane to witness the demonstration when Eddie snares a victim. Hats go in the air, schoolboys whistle, and behind the ground in the train yard engine drivers set up a great cock-a-doodling.

120 The Referee, 21 February 1935: 17.
121 ibid., 21 February 1935: 17.
The crestfallen batsman does not get much of a kick out of all this. Especially was this so with Ray Little who, before he had time to know he was at the wicket, saw his off stump go whirling merrily away first ball.

Facing a "pair," Ray Robinson walked into all this din to offset the hat-trick. The crowd clamoured for blood, but Robinson got his bat down just in time as the ball aped straight at his off stump. The crowd derived great amusement at the demeanour of Gilbert at this stage. He had taken complete charge of the batting operation and on one occasion he waved Wyeth back in airy fashion as if to say, "Stay there old chap, we've got all the afternoon to get those runs."

Leading by 28 runs on the first innings, Queensland were set 310 to win the match. In compiling a score of 281 they fell 28 runs short of the total required to win and only had themselves to blame after having played themselves into a winning situation. Bensted made a bright 71. Chilvers, on a wicket that was responsive to spin, captured 6 wickets for 124 runs. The New South Wales fielding was without blemish. When Gilbert went in to bat "women in the stands shrieked with excitement." Early in his partnership with Levy Gilbert alertly "moved his feet about the creases in some quaint batting postures while he also dashed smartly between the wickets to help Levy retain the strike." The batting highlight of the day was a last wicket stand of 42 between Gilbert and Wyeth.

The Telegraph (Brisbane) reported:

The crowd derived great amusement at the demeanour of Gilbert at this stage. He had taken complete charge of the batting operation and on one occasion he waved Wyeth back in airy fashion as if to say, "Stay there old chap, we've got all the afternoon to get those runs."

---

122 The Telegraph (Sydney), 15 February 1935: 3.
123 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 19 February 1935: 2.
124 The Telegraph (Sydney), 18 February 1935: 4.
125 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 19 February 1935: 2.
Gilbert's batting performance was summarised:

The fast bowler played surprisingly good cricket and in scoring 34 not out in 110 minutes played the best innings of his career. His previous best Sheffield Shield score was 24. Wyeth contributed eight in the partnership of 42 runs, scored in 44 minutes for the tenth wicket. Gilbert hit three boundaries, all off Chilvers. Two were superbly executed drives, and the other was a crisp cover shot. The crowd became hysterical during this partnership, and every stroke was loudly cheered.\(^{126}\)

In describing Gilbert's batting The Sporting Globe resorted to some racial stereotyping:

With a keen aboriginal eye, he watched every twist and turn of the ball, sometimes stopping it with his back, much to the amusement of the spectators. When a loose ball arrived he punched it with surprising power. He hit Chilvers for four—a straight drive under the sight screen. Thinking that Gilbert had discarded his caution Chilvers tossed up the next ball, and away it went to the pickets—perfectly cover driven.\(^{127}\)

The Queensland score crept along at a steady rate, "amid great excitement and vociferous roars of approval from numerous aborigines around the ground, and gradually the N.S.W. players began to feel uneasy."\(^{128}\) The partnership was ended, however, when Wyeth jumped down the wicket to hit a ball and was stumped by Oldfield. In spite of the defeat it was a glorious finish and Gilbert, Aborigine or not, was the hero of the day. "When the game was over Gilbert was rushed as he passed through the pavilion gate,"\(^{129}\) and, almost unbelievably in a fairly racist society, "Girls rushed out to shake him by the hand."\(^{130}\)

---

126 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 20 February 1935: 8.
128 The Telegraph (Sydney), 18 February 1935: 4.
129 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 19 February 1935: 2.
130 ibid. The explanation of such behaviour is outlined elsewhere. Some confidential but unsupported information suggests that a 'private' rumour circulated to the effect that Gilbert both sought and/or gained the attentions of at least a couple of white women during his first-class cricket career.
After a most enjoyable match, an article appeared in *The Bulletin*, which served to ‘compare’ the extent of racial discrimination in South Africa with the ‘enlightened’ situation in Australia.

Eddie Gilbert’s success with the ball has moved one Sydney journalist to expatiate on his chance of catching the team for South Africa. It is one with Buckley’s. The Afrikaners even barred Maoris in the M.L. Rugby Union team that toured the Union years ago. No one who has not lived in South Africa can form the slightest idea of the antipathy displayed by Afrikaners of Dutch and British nationality alike towards colored [sic] races attempting to intrude on what are fenced off as reserves for the white man. The White Australia policy is trifling by comparison.\(^1\)

Although Gilbert was to play in only two Sheffield Shield matches during the season he was to be in the top ten of all wicket-takers in the competition and led the bowling averages. His 14 wickets were gained at an average of 18.21. Along with the 20 wickets of Wyeth and Oxenham (22 wickets) the Queensland attack looked quite good. The financial arrangements between the Chief Protector and the Q.C.A. for the 1934-35 season resulted in Gilbert being provided with all his cricketing materials as well as civilian attire to the value of £10/5/0.\(^2\)

At a meeting of delegates to the Queensland Cricket Association (Q.C.A.) towards the end of February, a suggestion was made by Mr. L. O’Connor, a former State captain that, "Sheffield Shield games should be played under the control of neutral umpires."\(^3\) Mr. O’Connor, in suggesting the plan, pointed out that, apart from the Victorian criticism of Gilbert, Queensland previously had complaints against players of all the other States. Mr. Short also declared that it was about time Queensland wrote to the Victorian Cricket Association voicing disapproval of "the remarks passed by the Victorian cricketers on a man who was not called by

---

\(^1\) *The Bulletin*, 27 February 1935: 36.


\(^3\) *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 20 February 1935: 8.
the umpires." After some discussion, and bearing in mind the cost of the proposal with regard to umpires, consideration of the matter was deferred until the next meeting. Like so many other issues at this sort of meeting it was never acted upon.

Gilbert was invited to play in matches at Stanthorpe and Gympie during March, but as the Cherbourg settlement was in ‘small sickness quarantine’ he could not play. Epidemics of various kinds frequently swept through the settlement and the restrictions imposed were to periodically disrupt the first-class cricket career of Gilbert.

In mid-March 1935, Gilbert was back in the papers when the Rockhampton Cricket Association sought to approach the Home Secretary (Mr. E.M. Hanlon), to have him play for the Rockhampton team against the touring Waddy’s team. The letter was dated the 12th March 1935.

Dear Sir

At a Special Meeting of the above Association held last night finality was reached in connection with the visit of M.E.L. Waddys Interstate Eleven to play a two days match on the 6th, and 7th, April 1935 at Rockhampton and to further cater fo the public in general I was instructed to apply to you for the services of the Interstate Bowler Eddie Gilbert to play with the Rockhampton team in the said match.

By allowing this phenomenal [sic] bowler the privilige [sic] of making the trip, it would be the means of assisting the Association financially and at the same time would be a great treat to our younger players to see a bowler of the calibre in action. Should this bowler make the trip I can say without fear of contradiction that the public of Rockhampton and Districts will turn up in large numbers to see Eddie Gilbert in action.

I might point out to you that Country Associations North of Brisbane have very remote chances of seeing the cream of our International and State cricketers in action & when they do, it is practically off their own bat as we have very heavy guarantees to meet in arranging such visits.

134 ibid.

135 ibid., 9 March 1935.
The matter of expense re Gilbert will be defrayed by the Association provided same was not to [sic] heavy, and I can assure we will make his visit as comfortable as possible both on and off the field of play.

In conclusion we would be very pleased if you will give our request the best consideration possible and at the same time let me know the approximate cost, allowances etc that will be required in the event of your deciding to allow Eddie Gilbert to make the trip.

Awaiting your very early and favourable reply.

Yours in anticipation,
- - Rosen (Signature)
Hon Secretary.

There was some wrangling between Mr. E. Waddy and the Rockhampton Cricket Association over the amount of the guarantee that would be acceptable for the match to go ahead. This was to assume minor importance compared to comments made by the local cricket Association president, Mr. W.H. Kettle.

In his absence the Rockhampton Cricket Association had passed, by eleven votes to four, the resolution deciding to invite Gilbert to play. It was indicated that "a local representative player had voluntarily offered to stand down in favour of Gilbert, if the aborigines [sic] fast bowler's services could be secured." Perhaps aware of the feelings of Kettle, a member of the committee asked the reporter of the Evening News (Rockhampton) who attended the meeting to suppress any remarks Kettle might make. Kettle then made a statement over the telephone to a reporter of the Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton) indicating that he was bitterly opposed to the Gilbert decision and the other decision to suppress any remarks he would make.
A special meeting of the Rockhampton Cricket Association was then called.

At the Cricket Association meeting last night the chairman (Mr. W.H. Kettle) expressed in most emphatic terms his objection to Eddie Gilbert playing for Rockhampton against Waddy's team. "I will carry on with the arrangements for the match, but if Gilbert plays I will not go near the ground," he said.

His objection to Gilbert, he said, was that it was not fair to the local talent. In addition he was a blackfellow. Gilbert might be famous as a bowler in Brisbane, but there was a doubt as to his action. That doubt had been expressed both in Victoria and New South Wales and he did not think it fair to bring along a bowler about whose action there was some doubt.

"Whether I am right or wrong, I will stand or fall by it. I hold that Gilbert's inclusion will not be fair to the local players and that is my principal objection," he added.140

There were speakers for and against the actions of Kettle but after a time the matter was dropped.

The comments were widely reported and responses were swift.

"The colour line is absolutely unknown in cricket," remarked Mr. Harold Heydon, secretary of the New South Wales Cricket Association. "We have never received from players any colour line objections to Gilbert."

"As far as the State selectors are concerned, it is their duty to choose the best available team, irrespective of colour, or creed."

Mr. R.A. Oxlade, chairman of the Board of Control, commented that the colour problem had never arisen. "I do not know why Mr. Kettle used the term, "blackfellow," he said. It should not have been brought into the discussion."

"We pick the best available team," said Mr. E.A. Dwyer, the Australian eleven selector. "If we considered Gilbert worth a place in a team to play a test match against England, we would choose him."141

140 ibid.

141 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 21 March 1935: 8.
In defending himself Kettle said; "They have misinterpreted my remarks."\textsuperscript{142}

"From a Sydney Press message it may be inferred that I drew the colour line regarding Gilbert being asked to play with the Rockhampton team against Waddy's team; I did nothing of the sort," said Mr. Kettle, chairman of the Rockhampton Cricket Association, this morning.\textsuperscript{143}

Kettle was to mention that many of the world's cricketers were black. His principal objection was bringing a player from the south and leaving out a Rockhampton or Central Queensland player.\textsuperscript{144}

The Office of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals made its reply to the original request for Gilbert to play.

Sir,

With reference to accompanying request from the Honorary Secretary, Rockhampton Cricket Association, for permission for Eddie Gilbert to play Cricket with the Rockhampton team on the 6th and 7th proximo, I have to advise that as Cherbourg Settlement is at present in quarantine on account of Typhoid Fever, and is likely to be for sometime, [sic] no assurance can be given that Gilbert would, even if he desired, be available to play.

Furthermore when spoken to by the Superintendent on this proposal Gilbert stated that he did not desire to visit Rockhampton in view of the comments by an official of the Rockhampton Cricket Association that his delivery was open to doubt, and his colour had been disparagingly referred to.

Eddie Gilbert through the Superintendent therefore desires to decline the invitation of the Rockhampton Association.

Yours faithfully,

O'Leary (Signature)\textsuperscript{145}
Deputy Chief Protector of Aboriginals.

\textsuperscript{142} Evening News (Rockhampton), 21 March 1935.

\textsuperscript{143} The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 22 March 1935: 6.

\textsuperscript{144} Sydney Morning Herald, 22 March 1935: 12.

\textsuperscript{145} Queensland State Archives, Cherbourg transfer 1227, A/3751, letter 35/3066, 22 and 27 March 1935.
Through his popularity Gilbert was protected from many 'unkind' aspects of racial discrimination but there would be a number of occasions during his life that would have served to remind him of his racial origin and subordinate role in white society. The Rockhampton incident was one of these occasions.

Contrary to the Rockhampton situation the Townsville Cricket Association were keen to have Gilbert to play in a Brisbane representative team over Easter. Despite the offer Gilbert did not end up making the trip.

During July 1935, Eddie Gilbert ran away from the settlement after he was threatened by Jacob C., husband of Mary C., who he had "been fooling around with." According to official reports Gilbert had apparently become a 'nuisance' and was continually "running around with women." After he had absconded he was reported to have gone to Pialba and Urangan but he was expected in Brisbane at the Show in August, and would possibly be found around the Sharman boxing tent. He was seen at Wooloonga and was said to be afraid of Jacob C.

Tod Schacht was to remember seeing Gilbert during this time:

I met Eddie Gilbert when he came to my family home at Widgee, accompanied by two young Islander brothers, employed by my father.

Eddie was bearded and under an assumed name. When we eventually learned the real identity of the quiet stranger there was great excitement.

Now relaxed, and obviously aware that he was accepted with sympathy and understanding, he began to answer our numerous questions in a stumbling soft spoken manner.

Gilbert had left the settlement at Cherbourg without permission and was on the run from the police.

146 Eddie Gilbert, personal file information, op.cit., 15 August 1935.

147 ibid.

148 ibid.
In a day or so Eddie was gone. Where he went or what he planned to do we never learned.

In my young mind, in those days, he left a treasured memory. During his brief stay he cleared up many rumours, true and false, that had always haunted his cricket career.

I would like to refer to some of them. When playing for Queensland Gilbert believed that he was put in to bat last because other team members objected to him being higher up the order.

Being angry over this he slogged at every ball.

Some of the leading Shield players never spoke to him. One senior player often made insulting remarks about him in the dressing room.

He directed most of his bowling at the stumps because catches were so often dropped.

Unless the ball came right at them some of the slips fieldsmen were reluctant to attempt a catch because they feared they would drop it. He was not allowed to replace these fielders.

On social occasions, he was an outcast where nearly everyone avoided being seen with him.

He revealed the details of an incident in Melbourne which was a shocking example of racism even in those days.

On these occasions Eddie would get drunk, partly because it eased the pain of being black and unwanted, and partly because he wanted to retaliate in some fashion.\[149\]

It would be of immense value to fully explore and analyse this statement but there is no mechanism to verify the comments. However, they give an insight into the beliefs and opinions of Gilbert and, if accurate, are one of the few pieces of information that can be directly attributed to him. He was most certainly changed as a person by his experiences in the white world. The comments outlined point out the pressures he was exposed to and give an indication of the effects that these had on him.

\[149\] Tod Schacht, recollections in *The Gympie Times*, 31 October 1987.
Gilbert returned to Cherbourg during September and was given a thrashing by Jacob C., which was 'overlooked' by Superintendent Semple. Gilbert was then locked up at nights and required to work all day. Semple was unable to act against his absconding as Gilbert had permission to be off the settlement as part of his cricketing.\(^{150}\)

An interesting comparison to the plight of Gilbert is offered by the treatment of the part-Aboriginal boxer, Ron Richards. Richards was to become a great success during these years. His father, Dick Richards, held a certificate of exemption and because his son Ron "does not associate with aboriginals"\(^{151}\) he was not considered an Aboriginal under the Act. Despite this, the Department of Home Affairs became concerned about him and, in its paternalistic way sought to have some control over his earnings and boxing affairs. This power was partly achieved by gaining approval from Richards. An amendment to the Aboriginal Protection Act at the end of 1934 resulted in "half-castes who previously could not legally be regarded as aboriginals"\(^{152}\) being brought under the provisions of the Act. By this change in policy the extent of control and supervision of Richards by the Department was extended.

\(^{150}\) Eddie Gilbert, personal file information, op.cit., 24 September 1935.

\(^{151}\) Queensland State Archives. File A/3743, Letter 35/1619.

During 1935 a detailed report on Richards by the Chief Protector of Aboriginals was made to the Under Secretary of the Home Secretary's Office and, among other matters, it stated:

The definite opinion is held that Richards would be much better off financially if his earnings were controlled by this office, but it is safe to assume that, if it were decided to exercise such supervision over him, he would lose interest in his Boxing and his earnings would be correspondingly reduced.

He is fairly well educated and understands the handling of money, having been taught at the Purga Mission School until his father obtained exemption and, by his own age, he became a free man.

many
Like other Crossbreeds of his race he is unstable in character and inclined to be guillible [sic].

By the end of September the cricket season was 'gearing up' again and newspaper articles were already suggesting that Eddie Gilbert would be taken on the Southern tour. Gilbert had been playing well in local matches and the State selectors were probably prepared to risk him being no-balled in order to bolster the suspect State bowling attack.

Although he has lost some pace, Gilbert is still a shock bowler. Batsmen meeting him for the first time may be caught off their guard by the straight-at-the-wicket deliveries of the aboriginal, slammed down at the end of a very short run.

Plans were put under way to give Gilbert a higher standard of cricket as well as more regular practice on turf pitches. As a result Eddie Gilbert was given six months leave from Cherbourg to play in the Gympie competition.

---


154 The Referee, 26 September 1935: 9.

The Gympie Times outlined the decision regarding Gilbert:

Eddie Gilbert, the Queensland fast bowler, will play in Gympie this season. The Northern Suburbs Club has been successful in securing the services of the aboriginal bowler and he is expected to arrive next week. The qualities of Gilbert as a bowler are well-known to all cricketers and his appearance as a permanent member of a Gympie Club should do much to stimulate cricket here while he will also be of inestimable value to the representative team. Gympie in the past has sadly lacked in fast accurate bowlers and Gilbert’s presence in the team should greatly assist it in district and intercity matches...

...during one season Gilbert gave promise of obtaining a place in the Australian Eleven,..."156

Various conditions applied to Gilbert being allowed to play in Gympie. In early October, a letter from Superintendent Semple addressed to Mr. B. Spring, captain of the Northern Suburbs cricket team, outlined relevant points:

Dear Sir,

With reference to our conversation on the telephone regarding the engagement of Eddie Gilbert to play for your Club this Season. I have been in touch with the Chief Protector of Aboriginals, Brisbane and he will give his Authority on the following conditions.
1. Gilbert must be found a job.
2. Gilbert must be allowed to play on all Queensland Cricket matches should he be invited.
3. Should he be invited to go on the Southern tour he must be allowed to go.
4. Should my club call on him to play for matches in Brisbane, Maryborough, Bundaberg or Toowoomba he must be available.
5. Gilbert must not be allowed to play in matches in Brisbane without the Authority of the Chief Protector of Aboriginals, Brisbane. The Chief Protector must be advised of all matches that he may play in away from Gympie.

Yours faithfully,
Superintendent.\textsuperscript{157}

It later transpired that an additional reason for the decision to allow Gilbert to move to Gympie was because of certain aspects of his behaviour on the settlement. It was either a wise decision or an easy way out to have him leave Cherbourg for a time. There was some friction developing at Cherbourg between Gilbert and the white officials and between Gilbert and a number of the other inmates who were either jealous of him or had some personal grudge or grievance against him.\textsuperscript{158}

\textsuperscript{157} Eddie Gilbert, personal file information, \textit{op.cit.}, letter 30 September 1935.

\textsuperscript{158} ibid.
Everywhere he went everybody knew him. There was nowhere he could go without people recognising him. Most people really liked him but there were plenty of blokes who didn't like him for what he was and what he'd done and wanted to have a go at him. They said he did nothing for the black people. He was a rebel in his own way - he'd deny things -- reject things and wouldn't do them. His protest was silent -- that's how he protested...He'd turn and walk away if he didn't agree.159

Eddie Gilbert was in debt at the settlement and the move to Gympie and the offer of a job there and some possible money from cricket was seen as a way of 'squaring-up' his financial situation. The job that Gilbert was offered was on a farm doing tractor driving and general farm work at 20-25 shillings per week. Semple thought that "It is a good opportunity, if Gilbert will seize it but he is inclined to be lazy."160

A letter from the Chief Protector's Office to the Q.C.A. pointed out that Gilbert had obtained employment in Gympie and he was "granted permission to play with Gympie Northern Suburbs Club."161 It also stated that permission had been granted 'conditionally' and he would have to be "available for [State] selection if his expenses were met."162
"Five Ways," of The Bulletin, wrote up the arrangement about Gilbert and the gear he might need for the southern tour in a typically racist way:

The Queensland cricket heads have been in anxious consultation as to Gilbert's outfit if they send him south. They finally decided that the native must pay for his cricket gear out of his allowance, but that the Abo Department be asked to supply his civilian kit. If this is done the writer respectfully suggests that the fast bowler be issued with a white evening dress-suit instead of the customary black one. Otherwise he will certainly be galloped on at dances and other functions tendered to the team by shortsighted people who will take him to be part of the ordinary gloom inseparable from these social functions.\(^\text{163}\)

In his early matches in Gympie Gilbert performed well. Playing against Mary Valley he was "the destroying agent in Mary Valley's first innings, taking seven wickets at a cost of 21 runs."\(^\text{164}\)

He scored 12 runs when going in at first 'drop.' In the second innings he took 2 wickets for 14, out of the 5 for 45 to fall.\(^\text{165}\)

When the first details came out about the Country Week carnival in Brisbane it was indicated that Gilbert would not play in the early matches, but would "represent the country in the matches against combined metropolis and the Colts."\(^\text{166}\) Gilbert had been showing good form in Gympie and the reason for this decision was to 'nurse' Gilbert so he would be ready for the inter-State match with New South Wales. The quality of players invited to Country Week trials was reported to be very good.\(^\text{167}\)

\(^{163}\) The Bulletin, 13 November 1935: 35.

\(^{164}\) The Gympie Times, 29 October 1935: 7.

\(^{165}\) ibid.

\(^{166}\) The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 27 September 1935: 8.

\(^{167}\) The Sporting Globe, 23 October 1935: 9.
‘Old Q.,’ of *The Bulletin*, mentioned the event:

Every year about this time Queensland cricket followers go into a dither over the question of whether Gilbert will be allowed to play - he is an inmate of one of those semi-monastic establishments known as aboriginal settlements. The youth has been released for the match between Combined Country and Metropolis. Last year there was some feeling because the selectors, while willing to play Gilbert in Sheffield games in Brisbane, would not send him on the southern tour. The protector of Abos. took umbrage at this, but the matter was smoothed out.\(^\text{108}\)

Arrangements made between the Chief Protector and the Q.C.A. before the Country Week carnival indicate that it was a foregone conclusion that Gilbert would be chosen to represent Queensland for the season and would tour south. For Country Week the Q.C.A. were prepared to pay the cost of Gilbert’s accommodation and provide him with pocket-money and the cost of fares. He was to stay at the *Carlton Hotel* with Mr. Shaw of the Country Week committee. In relation to the 1935-36 season the Q.C.A. agreed to pay for his cricketing materials but were not willing to provide for any civilian clothing. His daily allowance was to be 17/6 per day with 5/- provided as pocket money.

In the Combined Country versus Metropolis match played at the beginning of November Metropolis won by 81 runs on the first innings. Gilbert, after returning from "a holiday at the seaside,"\(^\text{109}\) did not play in the earlier matches and was reserved specifically for this match, the State selectors believing that he was a ‘certainty’ for selection in the State team. Combined Country batted first and made 283 runs, while Metropolis responded with 7 declared for 364. In their second innings Combined Country were 1 for 96 when the game was concluded.

Main contributor towards Combined Country’s first innings total of 283 was Edmunds, who made a chanceless 101 and was well supported by the effort of G. Maddern, who contributed a watchful 55. Gilbert scored 17 runs in 23 minutes, during which he provided some

---


excitement by "lifting a delivery from Wyeth over the fence near the sight screen." Main wicket-takers for the Metropolis team were Pizzey, the spinner, who captured 5 for 49, off 14 overs, and Wyeth who took 4 for 45, off 20 overs. In the Metropolis total of 7 declared for 364 a number of batsmen contributed 'healthy' totals. Rogers, who was bowled by Gilbert for 95, was the top-scorer, while other good efforts came from Andrews (62), Honour (61 retired), and Hansen (68 retired). Gilbert, with 2 for 78, off 24 overs, was the main wicket-taker in the innings. He had Andrews out when he mis-hit "a fast rising ball to Maddern in the slips when he was 62." Operating off a longer run his bowling for several overs after lunch was twice as threatening as during the pre-lunch period. He bowled with great speed and variety in this period of play "Although the city batsmen were in an enterprising mood, Eddie Gilbert with his pace looked a bowler in a different class from anyone else in the side."2

Des Hansen was to recall his batting partnership with Queensland wicketkeeper Don Tallon (24 retired):

Donnie Tallon and I. They didn't have a new ball [to use during the innings]...and Donnie and I batting and handling Eddie easy enough with the old ball and I said to Donnie: "I think they're getting the new ball." Donnie said: "Well, I'm getting out." Then the new ball didn't come out so Donnie didn't get out. Donnie went up to Eddie and said: "You don't want to bowl with that old ball around you might do your shoulder in." Eddie asked to be taken off. [Laugh] Eddie was worse for Donnie than me - I was a left-hander...the ball was chasing Donnie.2

At the end of the match with its severe bowling test Gilbert suffered slight muscle soreness. This


172 ibid.

173 Des Hansen, personal interview, op. cit.
later led to stiffness and he became worse and "had to discontinue practice at the nets" with the State team in which he had been named. In addition to soreness he was found to be suffering from a severe headache. In view of the 'accepted' way that Gilbert should be used in a game it was disgraceful that he was required to bowl so many overs and possibly cause himself an injury. However, this was what was done and the State's 'shock' bowler became injured and was forced to rest in bed just a few days before the start of the Shield match.

When interviewed at his hotel last night Eddie Gilbert said his headache had disappeared, and the soreness in his shoulders was slightly easier. "If the doctor thinks I am not well enough to take the field I will abide by his decision." he added, "but I am feeling so much better since this morning that I am confident he will pass me."  

His condition was later described as "a muscular chill" by a Government medical officer sent to examine him prior to the Shield game. As a result he was found to be unable to play and The Courier-Mail (Brisbane) suggested that "this weakens the attack."  

Kearney, of The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), in a 'wasted' article had previewed the Shield match under the headline: 'GILBERT'S SHOCK TACTICS.'

How will the youthful New South Wales batsmen fare against Eddie Gilbert in the first Sheffield Shield match at the Brisbane Cricket Ground next weekend? The Queensland fast bowler generally has exercised an intimidating influence on visiting batsmen when opposing them for the first time, and on this occasion seven of the visitors will have their first experience of Gilbert's shock tactics.  

The article went to discuss various aspects about his bowling and pointed out that, up to that time, and since inter-State competitions were commenced in 1892-93, there had been only four more

---

"ibid."  
"ibid."  
"ibid."  
"ibid., 1 November 1935: 10."
successful fast bowlers. At the time Gilbert’s 54 wickets had been taken at an average of 27.24.

An unofficial Australian cricket team tour of India meant that many of the top players from the southern states would be missing from Shield matches and this caused Queensland cricket officials to look forward "to a more successful year in the Sheffield competition than usual." Although Queensland beat New South Wales in the opening match, the Queensland bowling "was not very impressive" without Gilbert.

When he had recovered Gilbert returned to Gympie and he played for Northern Suburbs against Cities at the end of November. The Gympie Times reported:

A pleasing feature of the display was the bowling by Eddie Gilbert. Much interest was taken in his bowling in view of the fact that he has been selected to represent the State against the M.C.C. team commencing next Friday. Gilbert bowled with more pace than usual and got plenty of assistance from the wicket. His deliveries were very hostile...

Gilbert took five wickets for 26 runs off 12 overs in the first innings and one for four in the second...Four of his victims were clean-bowled. Following the acrimony of the ‘bodyline’ series in 1933, a M.C.C. tour of 1935 was designed to be a goodwill tour. The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), in a preview of the match, believed that the Queensland attack was "strengthened by Gilbert’s inclusion." When interviewed before the match Gilbert indicated a desire to perform better than he had done when he previously played against the England team.


182 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 29 November 1935: 12.
Queensland vs. M.C.C.

Played at Brisbane. November 29th to December 3rd, 1935.

Queensland
- 1st innings - 10th.
  E. Gilbert, not out 1.
- 2nd innings
  E. Gilbert, b Baxter 3.

M.C.C.
- 1st innings
  E. Gilbert 27 overs 3 maidens 111 runs 0 wickets.

M.C.C. won by an innings and 106 runs.

Figure 7.9 Advertisement for Queensland versus M.C.C. match.

Figure 7.10 Queensland versus M.C.C. match information.
The match against Queensland was played towards the end of November, and was won outright by the M.C.C. by an innings and 106 runs. The visitors "struck their best batting form with a vengeance against Queensland." The Queensland team batted first and were all out for 203. Bensted top-scored for Queensland with 64 in a "lion-hearted display." Gilbert was not out on one. Langridge, Baxter, and Simms were the bowling 'stars' for the M.C.C. visitors.

Langridge (4 for 53, off 16 overs) kept a good length, Baxter (3 for 58) was efficient, swung the ball well and showed pace, while Sims (2 for 70), the slow bowler, proved to be dangerous. The fielding was up to the best possible standard.

The M.C.C. captain, E.R.T. Holmes in his book, Flannelled foolishness, wrote how they were to "meet Eddie Gilbert, the Aborigine bowler, who was reputed to be the "fastest 'thing' on earth."

Eddie Gilbert opened the bowling for Queensland and I never saw the slips, of which there were five, standing so far back, but, owing to the fact that he was wearing boots (to which he was unaccustomed) he kept getting tied up with his run and was generally at sixes and sevens. He was very fast, it is true, but we soon tamed him, as his analysis of 0 for 111 will show. During the course of the match, in an interview with a newspaper reporter, Holmes was to volunteer the opinion that Gilbert's bowling was quite fair. The Queenslanders had a good deal of 'leather-chasing' to do when the visitors, in making 558 in their innings, set a record score for English teams against an Australian side. The

---

183 The Bulletin, 4 December 1935: 35.
184 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 30 November 1935: 9.
186 ibid.
opening stand between Barber and Smith alone realised 204 runs. Human top-scored with 118 and Smith made 109, Barber 91 and Holmes made 80. It was to be an even-paced pitch and the English batting was of good quality and pleased the crowd. The Queensland bowling attack never looked dangerous and every single member of the Queensland had a bowl except Tallon the wicket-keeper, who stumped five and caught a sixth. Allen finished with the best bowling figures of the innings with 5 for 108. Christy, Hardcastle, Levy, and O’Connor took a wicket each. Based on his results (0 for 111) Gilbert proved to be a ‘flop’ and he was much below his best form. His pace was there at times but his length was erratic, and the openers played him with confidence. The Telegraph (Brisbane) indicated that for this match Gilbert had lengthened his run, apparently to maintain his pace:

Gilbert’s longer run (he is now taking 12 paces) was giving him trouble, and occasionally he baulked, as he did yesterday afternoon, just as he was about to deliver the ball. This indicates either a lack of practice by the aborigine with his run, or a failure to measure his distance and mark it correctly. For a fast bowler such uncertainty is disastrous...  

Despite his problems he was considered unlucky not to have had at least Barber’s wicket. In commenting on Gilbert’s performance one of the local papers, The Daily Standard (Brisbane), in his defence, suggested: “It would hardly be fair to condemn Gilbert for his bowling failure, because the pitch did not offer much help.”

A young spectator at the time was later to recall his impressions:

I managed to get a seat near the sightscreen in the outer at the ‘Gabba (always at a premium when Gilbert was playing).

From the time the ball left his hand, it was nothing but a blur. He repeatedly beat the bat, but strangely enough did not take a wicket.  

---

188 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 30 November 1935: 10.
190 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 6 March 1976: 6.
Queensland opened their second innings requiring 353 to avert defeat. They compiled 249 runs only, leaving the M.C.C. deserving winners over a disappointing Queensland. Levy batted confidently for his 76 and Christy played a fine innings for his 66. Gilbert was not out on 3. Baxter again took the bowling honours with an impressive 5 for 61. Sims also went well and managed to take 3 for 69.

In the aftermath of the game there was some speculation that Gilbert's comparative failure against the M.C.C. would cause him to be left out of the State side for the Southern tour. Despite this suggestion Gilbert was included in the team on the basis that he was the best fast bowler available. It was hoped he would get wickets on the tour and that there would be no further no-ball incidents.

‘Gabba,’ of The Bulletin, would make a comment which would yet again bluntly remind everyone of Gilbert's background:

The blackout of Eddie Gilbert as a bowler in the match against Marleybone [sic] was a blow to Queenslanders. Wiseacres had induced the darkie to bowl with a longer run, though for some years he had been singularly successful with the short one he developed naturally in his ancestral wurlie.

If Eddie reads this let him at once go back to his old style and consign his counsellors to the debil-debil.

Back at Gympie, playing for his club against Monkland, Gilbert took 3 wickets for 28, off 11 overs. He achieved these figures on a "wicket that gave him no assistance," but none of the batsmen took any chances. This was about the last match he would play in Gympie as arrangements were apparently under way by mid-December for Eddie to remain in Brisbane and play there after his return from the Southern tour. No indication was given whether Gilbert

---

191 The Sporting Globe, 4 December 1935: 8.


193 The Gympie Times, 10 December 1935: 5.
would be playing with a Metropolitan team, but it was suggested he would be a "big loss to local
cricket."  

Gilbert was employed by a Mr. Marks during his time at Gympie. In early December
Gilbert sought to leave his employment and this was later approved by the Chief Protector. The
reasons given by Gilbert wanting to leave his employment were not outlined but Marks, in
 correspondence with the Chief Protector (Bleakley), was to express his surprise at the tone of part
 of a letter to him outlining Gilbert's desire to leave his employment. In the same letter Marks
 stated: "I can assure you that I have gone out of my way to make this boy happy, and have also
 incurred a certain amount of expense in bringing him here." Marks had helped arrange pay
 for some of Gilbert's gear and he covered certain other expenses which were later re-imbursed by
 the Chief Protector.

Alan McGilvray was a member of the New South Wales team travelling to South
Australia to play cricket. This team joined the Queensland team on the same train while
Queensland were on their way to play Victoria. Eddie Gilbert was on the train and McGilvray
recalled that "he was a very quiet person, rarely talked and when he did it was invariably
short." With regard to the sleeping arrangements on the southern tour, Queensland player,
Des Hansen was to recall:

There was never any argument about who Eddie Gilbert was going to sleep with
- the Manager. He was in the cabins on the train with the other players during
the day-time. At night-time there was no argument. A lot of people said the
players wouldn't sleep with him and all the rest of it. That's a lot of 'rot'
[untrue].

---

196 Alan McGilvray, personal correspondence, February 1990.
197 Des Hansen, personal interview, op.cit.
While the Queensland team were travelling to Melbourne, *The Sporting Globe*, in previewing the match, said:

> Chief interest in the Queensland side will centre on the appearance in Melbourne of Eddie Gilbert, the aboriginal fast bowler. This interest arises from the fact that he was the chief figure in the sensational no-balling incident in Melbourne a few years ago, and the fact that A.N. Barlow, who no-balled him on that occasion, will be one of the umpires in this game.  

The appointment of Barlow was seen as "disturbing to cricket officials and enthusiasts, and makes Gilbert a very definite problem as far as that particular match is concerned." However, it would be a 'different' Gilbert, according to the *Truth* (Brisbane),

> ...not the Gilbert of old, though he is taking a much longer run, and to my mind, his deliveries are above suspicion.

> There is now no trace of that pronounced jerkiness which caused so many fierce arguments in the last few seasons.

> The only jerkiness in Eddie’s bowling that is apparent now is in his feet. He props, and must start all over again in his approach to the wicket.

The problem with his bowling run-up was attributed to his footwear. For some reason the question of suitable boots and their effects on his performance had been pursued with some interest by cricket reporters and the Q.C.A. and for some time. He had special boots made for him yet again. The cricket writer for the *Truth* (Brisbane) finally said it all in relation to the issue when he stated: "It all sounds like nonsense to me."

---

199 Ibid.
200 *Truth* (Brisbane), 15 December: 3.
201 Ibid.
As the boots cannot be made before the team leaves for the South, they will be sent after, and will arrive just in time for him to don them and play.

If this bright idea doesn't make Eddie a cripple, I'm a Dutchman. I have yet to hear of the pace bowler who can don a pair of new boots without breaking them in and bowl for a whole day.202

There were private questions before the match about the wisdom of playing Gilbert but it was considered that to make him twelfth man would be as good as admitting that his bowling was unfair. "That would not be so, as Queenslanders almost to a man are sure that he does not throw."203 The Queenslanders were prepared to test this even if it meant risking him being 'called' and losing his bowling services in the game. On the other hand the majority of Victorians firmly believed that Gilbert threw.

For the Queensland players the match had a special significance.

It was important since it was when he returned to Sheffield Shield after the trouble about his delivery in Melbourne where the umpires said he threw. He did not. He took a short run, bent his body far back and quickly moved it up and forward and delivered the ball. He aimed at about the middle of the wicket and as a result when the ball found its way to the end of the wicket it was usually chest high.204

Some Victorian people went further than opinions about Gilbert's bowling and Queensland player Ezra ('Boxer') Wyeth recalled how a lady came up to him in Melbourne to remark, "Doesn't he stink?,"205 in obvious reference to Eddie Gilbert. Such a statement was at the basic level of

202 ibid.


204 Ezra ('Boxer') Wyeth, personal correspondence, March 1992.

205 ibid., telephone conversation, March 1992. In response to the comment Wyeth has replied: "I will spare you my answer."

In a report by 'Machete' in The Bulletin during 1924 reference was made to a full-blooded aboriginal footballer player who played for an Ipswich (Queensland) team. "He was a front row-forward, and even the keenest of scrummers were apt to be a bit slow at packing in when the darky began to perspire." (The Bulletin, 1 May 1924: 31.) Two weeks later in the same paper 'Blobs' was to give some balance to this statement when he said: "The over-heated colored [sic]
many racist views that persisted in white Australian society.

The day before the match The Herald (Melbourne) published a series of photos of Gilbert bowling at practice under the headline: ‘HIGH SPEED CAMERA SHOWS GILBERT’S ACTION.’

The sequence of movements in his action shows pronounced arm and body swing, but no throw or jerk to make it a no-ball. At one point his forearm is slightly bent back from the elbow, due, doubtless, to his joints being more supple than those of a white man.\(^{206}\)

\(^{206}\) The Herald (Melbourne), 17 December 1935: 32.
In the same paper a short general interest story entitled, 'Gilbert Dislikes Our Weather,' was to appear:

Melbourne's weather has not cheered Eddie Gilbert, Queensland's aborigine fast bowler. "I still feel cold," he said to-day when wearing a heavy sweater.

At practice he batted as well as bowled. He is a left-hand "batsman" with a penchant for nimble foot work and the "French cut."\(^{207}\)

The Telegraph (Brisbane) had suggested that "the injury to Fisher had forced the tour selectors to include Eddie Gilbert in the side to play Victoria."\(^{208}\) It was to be a match in which it was only the weather that deprived Victoria of an outright win against Queensland, who went into the match hopeful of a comfortable win. Victoria had to be content with a first innings win by 338 runs after they had scored 9 declared for 522 runs, then dismissed Queensland for 184 in their first innings, and had them 5 down for 234 in the second innings before a successful appeal against the state of the light ended the play early.

Victoria's first innings started badly when Gilbert "skittled Ian Lee, the left-hander, for a duck with his seventh ball."\(^{209}\) The ball was a 'beauty' and the small crowd cheered him. Victoria recovered and a third wicket partnership between Rigg and Scaife added 201 runs. Rigg was the highest scorer in the innings with 128 and Scaife gave "a very attractive display"\(^{210}\) before being bowled by Cook when he had made 100. The Queensland bowling, even though accurate in the early stages, never appeared very difficult to the Victorians. One of the points of great interest was Gilbert's bowling under Barlow, who had no-balled him eleven times in 1931.

\(^{207}\) ibid, 19 December 1935: 1.

\(^{208}\) The Telegraph (Brisbane), 19 January 1935: 8.

\(^{209}\) The Herald (Melbourne), 18 December 1935: 10.

In spite of the doubts raised earlier in the week, Gilbert appeared with the Queenslanders, and his delivery was passed by the umpires. The batsmen who faced him before lunch said Gilbert lifted sharply but was he not nearly as fast as in 1931, being only a shade above Ebeling's pace. Their unanimous opinion was that Gilbert's delivery now was perfectly fair. He brings his arm well back to catapult a ball with a stiff arm action, and although at the start he did not attain great pace his lively deliveries flew off the pitch and swung both ways, causing the batsmen concern. He was generating real speed with a longer run and more correct action than in 1931.\(^{211}\)

With regard to the events, *The Telegraph* (Brisbane) reported:

> It would be useless for southern players persisting with their argument that Gilbert throws, now that the man who had the courage to call him four years ago, has expressed his opinion that the aborigines' altered action is quite within the law. But how near we were to prolonging the controversy, and in fact to driving Gilbert out of Shield cricket altogether. Had Fisher been fit yesterday, Gilbert would have been the drink carrier. The Queensland Cricket Association would have been placed in a most invidious position and it would have meant that the State selectors could no more have sent him south, or, for that matter, have chosen him in games in Brisbane. The dropping of Gilbert for this match against Victoria would have been tacit admission that we were not quite satisfied with his deliveries...\(^{212}\)

Apparently Gilbert was still suffering from a strained muscle sustained in Brisbane, and which curbed his pace. He tried hard but "had to be content with one for 128,"\(^{213}\) off 25 overs. His bowling figures did not affect his popularity with the crowd and this was highlighted by the cheering that greeted him when he bowled, especially in taking the new ball with the score at 437.

\(^{211}\) *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 19 December 1935: 8.

\(^{212}\) *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 19 December 1935: 8.

\(^{213}\) *The Age* (Melbourne), 20 December 1935: 9.
Accordmg to The Telegraph (Brisbane):

These slow wickets seem to dishearten Gilbert. He does not seem to fight against conditions as we have so often seen Tim Wall do on unresponsive pitches in the Tests. The result was yesterday that for most of the time he scarcely bowled above fast-medium. By the end of the day he was a very weary man, and just before stumps were drawn, he jokingly remarked to Charlie Andrews, "What time is the next train home, Charlie."214

Best bowling figures were obtained by medium-pacer Bensted, with 2 for 48 off 20 overs, while Wyeth took 2 for 76, Allen 2 for 82, and Cook 2 for 99. The Queensland fielding was sound and Tallon put in yet another good display behind the stumps. He gave away only 6 byes, and stumped 3 men and caught one.

The big score by Victoria robbed the game of much of its interest. Queensland’s batting failed rather badly, the side being all out for 184. Andrews was the chief contributor to the score with 46 runs. Gilbert made "a couple of batsmanlike strokes."215 The Herald (Melbourne) outlined the qualities of Gilbert, the batsman:

With 8/158, the innings was in a sorry way when Gilbert, who bats left hand, came in. The small crowd cheered him. They cheered louder when Eddie twice square-cut Gregory for three.

"The only batsman except Tallon to play the right game," chuckled a spectator.

That satire summed up the Queensland batting. Gilbert aroused merriment by on-driving Gregory for four, racing to 12 with Christy a grim 21. In going for another hit, Gilbert skied Gregory to Lee past mid-off. Eddie’s hitting was a spurt of flame in the dying embers of the innings.216

Of the Victorian bowlers, Smith caused trouble and took 3 for 57, while the other slow bowler, Gregory, had the best figures of 3 for 46, off 13.5 overs. The Victorian fielding was good and Queensland was unable to counter some clever field placing.

214 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 19 December 1935: 8.
216 The Herald (Melbourne), 20 December: 6.
Queensland’s second innings was a more satisfactory performance and at the close of play in the match they had averted an outright loss with 5 wickets down for 234. The innings had opened disastrously with Cook losing his wicket before a run had been posted. Allen scored a very useful century and this largely saved Queensland from outright defeat. Andrews played "an attractive hand for 58." The pitch was even-paced and the Victorian attack lacked hostility. Gregory achieved the best figures of 2 for 66, off 26 overs and 5 maidens.

When the Queensland team arrived in South Australia they discovered that Don Bradman, formerly of New South Wales, had been made captain of the youthful home side. "Third Man," of The Telegraph (Brisbane), was travelling with the Queensland team, and, in previewing the match, set the scene for a contest between Bradman and Gilbert when he suggested: "Bradman may have revenge on Gilbert for [the] Brisbane duck."

Gilbert did not bowl so impressively in Melbourne that one could hope for big things from him in this match, and I do not think we will see the best of the aborigine when he knows that the wicket is slow. Already he is not too enthusiastic about the job that is ahead of him in to-morrow’s match. Still we will have to include him in the team, although I hesitate to think what will happen should Bradman consider this an opportune time to revenge "the duck" he suffered at the hands of the aboriginal speedster in Brisbane four years ago.

Since then the pair have not met, so before the first ball is bowled to-morrow honours lie with Gilbert. And after all - well that’s in the hands of the cricket gods.

The reporter’s words were to be prophetic. Bradman made his presence felt in a game that saw South Australia score 8 declared for 642 runs. Queensland replied with 177 runs in the first innings and 289 in the second innings. The game was won outright by South Australia by an innings and 226 runs. This was the first time that Bradman and Gilbert had met since Gilbert had

---

218 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 24 December 1935: 4.
219 ibid., 24 December 1935: 3.
dismissed Bradman for a ‘duck’ in 1931 at Brisbane. When Bradman came into bat Levy, the Queensland captain, brought Gilbert on, especially for Bradman’s benefit, but without success. Bradman was to win this encounter when he scored a truly magnificent innings of 233. When he was 219 Gilbert almost had Bradman’s wicket but Wyeth, “deeming discretion the better part of valour, withdrew his hand from a hot square pull by Bradman off Gilbert, and the ball fairly burned its way along the grass to the fence.” Bradman proved to be a bowler’s nightmare and his terrific hitting had “the big crowd of 12,000 continually applauding.”

Despite the match-winning performance of Bradman Queensland player, Des Hansen, was to confess: “I didn’t mind it just to watch him bat.” The effect that Bradman had on his team was later described:

Against Queensland in Adelaide he hit up 233 in 191 minutes and when he came back to the dressing-room, having effectively put paid to the menace of Eddie Gilbert, they clustered reverently around, gazing at him, hanging on his every word.

Badcock and Waite also played splendidly, as did Ryan (72) and Walker (71). Waite was unlucky to be out for 99, after playing well. Badcock, after being dropped off Gilbert very early in his innings, went on to make a good 91, before Tallon took an awkward catch off Gilbert to dismiss him. Wickets were evenly distributed amongst the bowlers. Best were Levy with 2 for 116, Fisher with 2 for 103, and Gilbert with 2 for 121. Gilbert bowled well early but later the easy-paced wicket made him innocuous, “and none of the other bowlers was of first class.”

---


221 ibid. The match began on Christmas and after a quiet start to the day the crowd came in great numbers to watch Bradman batting.

222 Des Hansen, personal interview, op. cit.

standard." After the first day he suffered from slight stiffness in his legs. Umpire Scott admonished Gilbert during the Bradman-Walker partnership for "short, bumpy balls." On a few occasions Gilbert made the ball 'fly' and on one occasion Bradman was forced to duck to avoid a bouncer.

The Bulletin reported:

Gilbert accidentally bumped a delivery on the leg side. Bradman, who was batting, "frowned at the little aboriginal," to quote the report, and Scott hastened to reprimand the astonished darky. Another bumper, this time on the off, struck Badcock on the wrists. Again Scott took a disapproving stand.

Umpire Scott, incidentally, thought to be Australia's 'wildest' fast bowler in his Sheffield Shield days, was to later give his version of "the alleged bodyline incident on Christmas Day:" 

"I should have 'no-balled' him and warned him on the first occasion, and then stopped him from bowling the second time," said Scott. He told Gilbert that under the new rule he could not bowl at the batsman, Gilbert then said he would pitch the ball up more.

"Levy came across and asked what was wrong," said Scott, "and I told him I had warned Gilbert. Christy intervened, and questioned my right to tell the bowler how to bowl, and I explained that so long as Gilbert did not bowl at the batsmen I did not care how or where he bowled."

Queensland fielding was tight, but a number of chances were missed. Christy missed a chance of catching Parker in Gilbert's second over, and "in the same over Wyeth missed Badcock." Tallon took "some of Gilbert's deliveries wide of the leg stump with acrobatic leaps which earned

---

224 The Daily Standard (Brisbane), 26 December 1936: 2.
225 ibid.
227 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 3 January 1936: 11.
228 ibid.
the applause of the crowd.\textsuperscript{230}

Allen (54 runs) monopolised batting honours in Queensland's very modest total of 127. Five South Australian bowlers took wickets. Best figures were 3 for 29 by Waite and the 3 wickets for 13 runs, off 9 overs, by Wall.

The Queenslanders put up more fight in the second innings in reaching their score of 289. The South Australian attack was not startling but there was "a grim remorselessness about it"\textsuperscript{231} which resulted in a regular fall of wickets. Tallon made a number of "sweetly-timed and executed strokes"\textsuperscript{232} in his 88, while Hansen batted splendidly in making 80. Gilbert was out without scoring and

...disgustedly tried to hit the ball as it rebounded off the stump and then dejectedly returned to the pavilion. "I thought I was set for a century when I clouted that first one," he remarked as he came into the dressing room.\textsuperscript{233}

Collins secured 4 wickets for 41, the most wickets, and the best average for the South Australians in the second innings.

Bradman was credited with moulding a good team and using intelligent field positioning. It was a good win and a game in which Bradman had 'evened the score' with Gilbert.

The Referee was to comment that Gilbert had experienced a run of 'barren' results in recent matches:

Following none for 111 against the M.C.C. team, he secured 1 for 128 against Victoria, and 2 for 121 against South Australia. His wickets in three matches thus cost 360 runs.\textsuperscript{234}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{230} The Age (Melbourne), 21 December 1935: 7.
\bibitem{231} The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 30 December 1935: 6.
\bibitem{232} ibid.
\bibitem{233} The Telegraph (Brisbane), 19 December 1935: 8.
\bibitem{234} The Referee, 26 December 1935: 9.
\end{thebibliography}
These remarks were possibly a little unfair when the conditions of easy-paced pitches, the results of the other bowlers, the missed chances, and the great batting that was encountered, were all considered. It is also likely that these factors, in association with various other events and the pressures of the tour, were to result in negative thoughts and a lack of confidence by Gilbert. This self-doubt was to be self-fulfilling in relation to Gilbert’s perceived level of success.

On the southern tour Gilbert received some good support amid the continual reminders of his racial background. State player on the tour ‘Boxer’ Wyeth recalled:

Racial incidents...some came from spectators... Eddie was badly treated in Melbourne and Adelaide. People avoided him when he was on trams in both places. In Adelaide two of us tried to buy tickets to see a movie with him. We were told that blacks were not admitted.\(^{235}\)

With regard to Gilbert and his behaviour compared to other team members ‘Boxer’ also remembered:

Alcohol. He may have drunk some but it was never a problem. Two members of the team at Adelaide arrived 15 minutes before the game with obvious hangovers. They had spent the night with prostitutes.\(^{236}\)

Queensland player, Des Hansen, was to recall some social activities on the tour and in Adelaide in particular:

We were all mates -- no fighting. Sunday we wouldn’t play. We would all go away for the day. We’d all go out together -- there wouldn’t be anyone missing. Eddie was a good type of bloke...he wasn’t a ‘butt-in’ type of person...all the rest of the ‘mob’ [team] were good to him. Others might have noticed things that I didn’t...he [Gilbert] was a bit handy for us. We were only young blokes, you know. In Adelaide we used to put him on the verandah of the hotel on Christmas evening. Eddie’d wave to the girls -- we’d go down and, of course, we’d end up with the girls and Eddie would go back up to his room.\(^{237}\)

\(^{235}\) Ezra (‘Boxer’) Wyeth, personal interview, op.cit.

\(^{236}\) ibid.

\(^{237}\) Des Hansen, personal interview, op.cit. In interview Des pointed out that he had been bashed up by a group of Aboriginals youths while going for a walk near his home. He suggested that these youths, unlike Gilbert, were ‘cheeky.’
CHAPTER VIII
A CAREER ENDS

The final match of the Southern tour was against New South Wales in Sydney in the early part of January 1936. This resulted in an outright win for the home team by 182 runs. New South Wales batted first and scored 366. Queensland replied with 344 to make it an even match to this point. In their second ‘dig’ New South Wales compiled 376 for 9 declared but, in reply, Queensland were all out for 216.

In New South Wales’ first innings Mudge played a patient innings of 94, while Robinson gave an entertaining display for 67. New South Wales captain, McGilvray, made 62 useful runs before being caught Levy, bowled Gilbert.

McGilvray was to write many years later in his book, McGilvray - And The Game Goes On:

I played against Gilbert on the Sydney Cricket Ground one day when his reputation had been well and truly entrenched. The first disconcerting thing I noticed about him was that his hand was a sort of bright pink, and when the ball flew from it there was a moment when the background of pink hand and dark skin made it hard to pick up the ball. You had no time at all to get hold of it anyway, and with that instant of confusion it was almost impossible. I ran into him on a fast pitch at the SCG and he had a breeze at his back as well, as if he needed any help. I faced one ball that hit the pitch and flew, and as the ball seared at my face it was all I could do to get the shoulder of the bat to it. The ball kept going, and I was caught at third man. I asked the fieldsman later just where he had taken the catch, and he said he was right on the fence and took the catch about a foot above the pickets. Had he not been there it would have been six. Now I did nothing to help that ball on its way, so the sheer pace of it had taken it from its one bounce on the pitch to the end of the ground on the full. That was the fastest ball I ever faced, and if I’ve seen anybody hurl one down faster since, I certainly haven’t noticed. Those you see at close quarters are more indelibly imprinted, for sure, but no matter how I analyse cricket down the years, I cannot imagine anybody bowling a ball faster than Eddie Gilbert.¹

The batsmen were fairly restrained, particularly against Gilbert, who was fast and made the ball 'bump' awkwardly, apparently because of a 'spot' on the wicket. Ezra ('Boxer') Wyeth recalled:

I saw a circle of grass about dead centre on the pitch. Any ball hitting it had to lift higher than usual and be faster. I walked over to Eddie and pointed it out to him. His response: "I see it. I am aiming at it."2

Cook, for Queensland, "bowled pluckily throughout, capturing 4 wickets for 101 runs."3 Wyeth secured 2 wickets for 73, and Gilbert, after striking 3 batsmen with rising balls, took 2 for 98, off 24 overs. Eddie Gilbert was, as usual, the centre of attention. Umpire Borwick, at the opposite end to Gilbert, scrutinised "the Queenslander's action with every ball he delivered."4 Gilbert bowled with terrific pace early, but was fairly inaccurate. His re-appearance in Sydney attracted attention and the Sydney Morning Herald reported: "He still takes a short run, though probably a step or two longer, than when here before, and by rapid arm action and shoulder action he obtained great speed."5 The Truth (Sydney) gave its opinion of his bowling action when it stated: "It is certain that there is not now, if actually there ever was, anything wrong with the delivery of the ball by the little aborigine."6 It had been reported that Gilbert had lost much of his amazing speed "which characterised his efforts a few seasons back."7 His performance on the first day made a 'lie' of that statement.

Gilbert amazed the spectators with his deliveries. His pace "visibly rattled several of the

---

2 Ezra ('Boxer') Wyeth, personal correspondence March, 1992.

3 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 2 January 1936: 8.

4 ibid.


6 Truth (Sydney), 5 January 1936: 10.

7 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 2 January 1936: 12.
batsmen" and he created a sensation during his second spell when he sent down "a succession of
bumpers which had the batsmen ducking." The Sun (Sydney) described some early punishment
handed out to Gilbert:

In Gilbert’s second over Robinson hooked the first ball for four, cover drove the
next to the boundary, and from the third scored a single. Mudge also got one,
and the seventh ball was cleanly hooked by Robinson for four. It was great
batting.10

Robinson had been daring facing Gilbert but, when he was 53, was struck on the hand by Gilbert
and forced to retire hurt.

Gilbert’s fifth over created a thrill. Little, who joined Mudge, being nearly out
when Tallon raced 15 yards to the leg side, and dived for a catch off the
batsman’s glove. The ball, however, rolled out of his gloves after a spectacular
effort. Then Gilbert sent down a terrifically fast short ball, which struck Mudge
on the finger, and he left the field.11

While fielding, and contrary to some of his previous efforts, Gilbert proved to be very ‘lively,’
and did some excellent work. He took a very fine running catch when White was dismissed.

During the first day a no-ball incident occurred which did not come to light until a little
later in the game. It was originally thought that Gilbert was no-balled for dragging his foot across
the crease while bowling, but Umpire Borwick, who was seeing Gilbert for the first time, thought
that Gilbert’s bowling was intimidatory.12 Umpire Borwick came to the decision that Gilbert
was bowling at New South Wales’ batsman Little with the intent of intimidating him. He then
undertook the action that he did.

8 ibid.
9 ibid., 8.
10 The Sun (Sydney), 1 January 1936: 8.
11 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 4 January 1936: 7. Mudge retired hurt after having his right
thumb split.
F. J. GOUGH.

With years of first-class cricket ahead of him, Queensland skipper Frank Gough, has already built up a fine record. He has scored more than a thousand runs in Shield cricket to date and looks set for many more. His general play is very sound, though he can bat with great freedom on occasion. His risky hooks which often cost him his wicket have disappeared somewhat of recent years. As a slow leg-break bowler, Gough has developed into a useful change. [Image of F. J. Gough]

E. BENSTED.

One of Queensland's best all-rounders, Eric Bensted has often done well with either the bat or ball in big cricket. Last year he made 145 for Queensland against South Australia and bowled well. A right-handed fast medium bowler, he can make the ball get up by reason of his height. [Image of E. Bensted]

H. S. GAMBLE.

Is very definitely a possibility for selection in the next Australian Test side to tour England if he keeps improving at the rate he has maintained this season. He has only to concentrate on the protection of his wicket when batting to force himself upon the attention of the selectors next year. Herb Gamble went into the Queensland side last year in Sydney when Eddie Gilbert was injured. Taking a very long run, he sends the ball down at a little above fast medium pace, an occasional ball keeping very low. Gamble is most accurate, and can keep going for long spells. A live wire in the field. [Image of H. S. Gamble]

J. GOVAN.

A sensational rise from secondary school cricket to the Queensland side in two months has been the experience of Jack Govan, the new slow bowler. A wonderful performance against the Country, when he took 16 wickets for 60 runs, was responsible for the early trial in big cricket of this 18-year-old slow bowler. [Image of J. Govan]

ROY LEVY.

Roy Levy is a forcing type of left-hander whose name was freely mentioned as a possible Australian eleven candidate prior to the departure of the 1930 team for England. Unfortunately, pressure of business precluded his taking part in big cricket during that season and his services were therefore lost to the State. Following his recent heavy scoring in club cricket it is to be expected that he will add to the batting strength of the team and he also should tone up the fielding. [Image of Roy Levy]

C. W. ANDREWS.

Originally a member of the New South Wales side, Charlie Andrews made his debut for Queensland last season. Short in stature, he is a brilliant batsman, with fine shots on both sides of the wicket. The best fieldsman in the Queensland team, Andrews is a specialist at mid-off or cover. [Image of C. W. Andrews]

G. COOK.

Geoff Cook gives promise of being one of the best youngsters ever developed in Queensland. Only 21 years of age, he has already had the experience of a year's play in first-class cricket and his batting has improved considerably. An ideal opening batsman, Cook has plenty of patience, besides being able to play all kinds of bowling with equal freedom. His fielding has improved a great deal recently, and he is also a good change bowler. [Image of G. Cook]

H. LEESON.

H. Leeson, the wicketkeeper, hails from Townsville, where he has had considerable success as a keeper, and compiled some fine scores with the bat. In the emergency caused by the injury to Angus Marshall with this season's touring Sheffield Shield team, Leeson was requisitioned by telegram. Arriving on the day of the match he went straight to the Sydney Cricket ground and gave a fine exhibition of keeping. He followed this with two fighting innings against the strong New South Wales bowling. [Image of H. Leeson]

L. M. BREW.

L. M. (Micky) Brew, the Western Suburbs allrounder, is no newcomer to the State side. He, with varying success, has represented Queensland on several occasions. This season he has been a vital factor in the Western Suburbs attack and on Saturday last his three wickets for 74 and his cleverly compiled 104 were match winning efforts. Added to his bright fielding, Micky should prove a thorn in the opposing sides during the forthcoming matches. [Image of L. M. Brew]

D. HANSEN.

As his fine second innings knock against Victoria proved, Des Hansen is one of the best colts Queensland cricket has produced. A left-handed batsman, he has quite a sound defence and has the ability to use his feet to slow bowling, besides possessing a powerful pull shot to the leg boundary which brings him many runs. In the field, Des is often brilliant as an outfielder, saving many fours with great runs along the fence. [Image of D. Hansen]
The Sunday-Mail (Brisbane) was to report:

He warned Gilbert, no-balled him, and told him that if it were repeated he would not be able to bowl again in the match. He also mentioned the matter to Levy, the captain. Gilbert was reluctant to bowl the next over, and it was not so fast either, but later in the day he was sending them down quite fast enough.

Borwick gives a decision and does not discuss it—publicly at any rate. But it was learned from several sources that there was no objection to balls which hit the New South Wales batsmen, Mudge and Robinson. No doubt the batsmen felt them, but they were perfectly fair deliveries, and it was not because of them that Gilbert was warned.  

As had often proved to be the case with various controversies during Gilbert’s career the current intimidatory bowling incident provoked much comment. The law, in part, which was used to ‘call’ Gilbert, read thus:

Any ball delivered, which, in the opinion of the umpire at the bowler’s end, is bowled at the batsman with the intent to intimidate or injure him, shall be considered unfair, and ‘no-ball’ shall be called, and the bowler notified of the reason.

The explanation of the M.C.C. ruling with regard to the judgment of intimidatory bowling was more fully outlined by The Courier-Mail (Brisbane):

The M.C.C. ruled that once the umpire had decided that a bowler was adopting direct attack methods, he should caution the bowler, and if the caution was not effective he should inform the captain of the fielding side and the other umpire of what had happened. If that were not effective, the umpire was then empowered on a repetition of direct attack to call "dead ball" and call the over completed. The umpire was then to request the bowler’s captain to take the offending bowler off immediately. He was to report the incident to the captain of the batting side and then, later, report the whole proceedings to the M.C.C.

---

15 ibid.
The warning of Gilbert was to make him the first bowler in Australia "to be dealt with in a first-class match under the new law."\textsuperscript{16}

The \textit{Truth} (Sydney), in an article on the matter, was to report:

So Borwick "called" Gilbert. And the ball clean bowled Alec Marks! Explain that, Rastus! Was it intimidatory or was it intimidatory?

Gilbert's bowling had not the taintest resemblance to the short stuff of Larwood.\textsuperscript{17}

It is worth noting that Gilbert did not bowl with a leg trap set.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, 6 January 1936: 12. A similar incident had occurred in the match against South Australia.

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Truth} (Sydney), 5 January 1936: 6.
With regard to the incident, Jack Fingleton, in his book *Cricket Crisis*, was to write:

The Queensland players were resentful, but they had accepted the verdict passively. The New South Wales players, realising that anything Gilbert could do with the ball was but a mild shadow of the Larwood assault, were inclined to be sympathetic. No violent protest had been made by the batsmen. No voice of protest had been heard from a barracker.  

The contributing factor of the pitch needed to be considered. In this regard *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane) provided some information:

The wicket appeared to be the most difficult at the grand stand end, and Gilbert made the ball bounce disconcertingly. The ball which struck Robinson on the hand, forcing him to retire, was very little short of good length, but rose nastily, and in a manner which was not compatible with the usual playing qualities of the Sydney wicket. Throughout the match batsmen have appeared reluctant to go for their shots when batting at this end, as there was no uniformity in the rise of the ball.

Gilbert continuously seemed to be seeking spots on the wicket and in both innings he has proved a difficult customer to handle. Indeed, on one occasion he was no-balled by Umpire Borwick, who considered that particular delivery was intimidating and dangerous. There were many others of a similar type throughout the day which may easily have met with a same fate. Gilbert maintained great pace throughout, and except for a period when Marks treated him in cavalier fashion he always seemed likely to obtain wickets.

L.H. Kearney, also writing in *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), had a strong viewpoint:

In my opinion Umpire Borwick, who would not no-ball Larwood with the aid of a leg field, had no right to call Gilbert for using bumpers after he had hit batsman with straight balls. Gilbert's bowling, if he does throw, is well within the law.

The belated no-balling of Gilbert for alleged intimidation shows that Australian cricket is still in an hysterical mood, and the sooner our officials recover their balance the quicker the game will regain its true sporting poise. The batsman is the bowler's rival, and if we do not desire the creation of a colourless cottonwool type of batsman, with all the odds in his favour, then let us leave the time honoured fast bowler's traditions alone.

---


19 *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane), 4 January 1936: 13. The article had the headline: 'Gilbert's Tactics are not intimidatory.'

20 *ibid.*, 8 January 1936: 8.
There were also those who thought that Gilbert was an innocent victim of the aftermath of the 'bodyline' series and was now being subjected to yet another attempt to end his first-class career or at least have his 'claws' blunted. F. Ricketts, writing in The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), asked the question: "Is fast bowling doomed?" The Bulletin, in a fairly sexist manner, was to point out: "The incident will be noted by the historian of the Decline and Fall of Cricket, now a game fit for any lady to play."

At the time of the incident in Sydney neither the Queensland manager nor the captain were prepared to discuss the matter. "If it happened, it was not premeditated," said the manager. Two Queensland officials, also at the ground, stated that they believed the umpire was right to act if he thought the batsman had been intimidated.

The discussion of this incident continued while the match was in progress. Queensland in their innings compiled 344 runs. Andrews had a great 'knock' of 118 runs and Christy played a pleasing innings for 51. Tallon played well for the same score as Christy. Gilbert had his middle stump knocked back by Cooper before he had scored to give New South Wales' a first innings lead of 22 runs. New South Wales bowling honours went to Cooper with 3 for 66, off 19.4 overs. Best of the rest were White (2 for 28) and Hynes (2 for 26).

The highlight of the New South Wales' second innings of 376 was the tremendous score of 201 by Marks. Easton played 'beautifully' for his 40 and Hynes 'chipped in' with 36. Gilbert maintained his pace well, and finished with 3 wickets for 113, off 20 overs, with Marks alone displaying the utmost confidence against him. Levy and Wyeth captured 2 wickets apiece.

23 The Sunday-Mail (Brisbane), 3 January 1936: 13.
24 ibid.
Queensland had made a good showing in the match so far but in chasing a deficit of 398 runs they slumped badly (216 runs) in a way that flattered the local bowlers. The Queenslanders "'scratched' around at the creases until the inevitable happened." As in the first innings, Andrews gave the best batting display and played in a delightful manner for 38. Honour was next best with 34, while four other batsmen scored in the twenties. Because of the no-balling incident, in New South Wales' first innings, Gilbert's turn at bat was received with "sympathetic cheers by a small but sporting crowd."

Gilbert was given the best reception as he walked to the wicket, and brought down the house when he slammed the first ball from McGilvray to the fence.

The next ball went for 4 byes and he hit his third ball past cover point for 3.

It was bright and breezy, and Eddie, with his red cap perched on the back of his head, enjoyed it.

He was out when he "played football" with the first ball he received from Hynes.

The New South Wales bowling was only fair but Chilvers took 4 for 78 and Hynes was accurate in taking 4 wickets for 43, off 15.3 overs.

While the match was in progress Eddie Gilbert became subjected to personal criticism by W. Fingleton, younger brother of Jack Fingleton, the international cricketer. In an article for The Telegraph (Sydney), Fingleton said:

Eddie Gilbert, Queensland's aboriginal fast bowler, made his reappearance at the Cricket Ground for the first time in three seasons. Watching this small ebony parcel of elasticity displaying a peculiar mixture of galvanic energy and absolute lethargy, one wondered if his heart is in big cricket.

27 ibid.
It was apparent, when Ray Robinson was brilliantly driving his best deliveries to the boundary, that Eddie's spirits were not high. His figures were then in the vicinity of none for 80.

And it was felt that it was not solely because he thought that he was not bowling well that his spirits were affected. In fact, Gilbert made the ball get up dangerously on many occasions, and no batsman except Robinson was completely at his ease when facing him. Even Robinson was not quick enough to get his head out of the way of one delivery.

But it would not only be wrong to say that Gilbert "drops his bundle" when hit: it would be doing him an injustice.

The apparent explanation is that he is not suited for big cricket.

Reared on an aboriginal mission station in the Queensland bush, more susceptible to variations of climate, and, in general, living the ordinary life of the mission aboriginal when not playing cricket, it is hardly reasonable to expect Gilbert to possess the equilibrium necessary for Shield cricket.

It must be difficult for him to travel with men whose interests, outside of cricket, are vastly different from his own, and to appear in what is undoubtedly for him an uncomfortable dress, before thousands of people.

Gilbert, as freak cricketer, has raised intense interest among the Australian public; but it is time for him to be regarded as just an ordinary human.28

The Queensland players were incensed by the article and it proved to be "The only topic of conversation among the Queensland Shield team in the hotel"29 the morning it was printed. In a reply that appears to indicate that Gilbert was well accepted by team-mates, Mr. F.J. Bardwell, the Queensland team manager, wrote to the newspaper:

I would like to refer to a paragraph in which there is an inference that Eddie Gilbert, on account of the environment in which he lives in Queensland, feels out of place when travelling with the team. Such an inference could be made only by one who has not had the opportunity of associating with Eddie as his fellow players have.

The facts are that Gilbert, in his hotel, when travelling, and on the field, is as much a member of the team as any of the twelve.

28 The Telegraph (Sydney), 2 January 1936: 5.

29 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 4 January 1936: 7.
His company is sought by his club mates, who all realise that he is a thorough gentleman. He has a keen sense of humour, enters into all the pleasures of his associates, takes his cricket very seriously, and always plays for his team. To suggest that he is not suited for big cricket is absurd.\footnote{ibid.}

The Editor, in publishing the letter, printed a footnote suggesting that, "the purpose of the article was entirely sympathetic to Gilbert."\footnote{ibid.}

"Third Man," of The Telegraph (Brisbane), was with the team when the article appeared. He was to write:

From my experience with the touring team I would not hesitate to endorse the remarks of the Queensland manager. As a matter of fact Gilbert is a very popular member of the side, and his dry humour make [sic] him very pleasant company both in the hotel and on the train.

Players never allow him to be on his own and he enters into all the pleasures of the tour with the same zest as any of the others.

To suggest that he is in any way unhappy or uncomfortable with his fellow team members is ridiculous.

Only this morning Gilbert was in the bathroom adjoining mine and he was whistling and singing in quite a buoyant fashion. Then as he walked down the steps to breakfast I overhead him singing "Poor Old Joe."

"You seem to be happy this morning, Eddie," I remarked to him. "Yes, by cripes I am happy and I don't know why," he replied, with a smile.

Gilbert himself is undisturbed by the comment in the paper to-day. "Oh, you newspaper blokes, you've got to have something to fill your papers," he remarked when I discussed the question with him during the morning.\footnote{The Telegraph (Brisbane), 3 January 1936: 10.}
The Truth (Brisbane), was more direct in its response to Fingleton's article and suggested "that all cricket followers were disgusted with the paper in question." It went further:

Psychological hurdles, racial distinctions, even the humdrum of everyday life, were dragged before what the paper presumed to be Eddie's civilisation-dazzled eyes as reasons why he is not the world's greatest bowler...

So it is with Gilbert. He is continually leg pulling both with batsmen and fans.

His attitude in the field is a delightful pose. Those with eyes to see spend their time in between whiles, chortling with Gilbert.

The key to the situation is supplied by his marvellous fielding. On the day that he was criticised, he brought off a catch running backwards that only a fieldsman with the anticipation of a genius could attempt.

From his apparently slumberous pose, covering wideawake watchfulness, Gilbert slipped into a dramatic action that turned the tide right into Queensland's favor [sic]...

But to print virtually that Gilbert never was, never will be, and never could be a cricketer's bootlace all because of his natural environment, is not only in the worst possible taste; it simply isn't cricket.

The Truth (Sydney) reiterated many of these remarks and added:

Shades of the League of Nations. How some people just can't keep their noses out of trouble! Not only was the subject taboo. Applied to Gilbert, it was grotesquely inaccurate, hopelessly fuddled and unfortunately a studied insult.

Gilbert has his shortcomings as a fast bowler. So has Bradman at batting to the Arch Priests of batting orthodoxy.

Furthermore, Gilbert bowled...was zipping off the pitch as well as ever at finish. The "wilting" Eddie certainly strung one over his arch critic.

The comments outlined display a keenness to defend Gilbert against a perceived attack on him.

In so doing they raise and discuss issues such as Gilbert's relationship with the other players.

33 Truth (Brisbane), 5 January 1936: 2.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
Although some discussion has been made on this aspect earlier the statements made present different information and perhaps indicate the 'changed' nature of such relationships with different groups of players in the state team. It may well be that the incident helped unify the Queensland team in the face of a perceived unfair attack on one of their players. Even so there was some evidence of disquiet in the team with at least one player (Cook) refusing to speak to Gilbert and a few other players 'reluctant' to share taxis, dining tables and rooms with him. Queensland player on the tour, Ezra ('Boxer') Wyeth, has recalled:

Eddie was a fine person. On the 1935 trip he spent much time with the three members of the team that played for the University. There was some racial bother. But I cannot remember any specific example. I could give you three names but I had better not.\(^{36}\)

After the match a 'lively' discussion took place in New South Wales as to whether Gilbert would be included in the next Queensland team due to the events in Sydney. "In some quarters there is an outcry that his bowling is a physical menace."\(^{37}\) The Telegraph (Sydney) asked the obvious question: "Has the last been seen in Sydney of Eddie Gilbert, The Queensland aboriginal fast bowler?"\(^{38}\) Yet others suggested that Gilbert would not play in the next Shield game against South Australia, "as he had had a fairly strenuous trip for a not particularly robust fast bowler."\(^{39}\) The Courier-Mail (Brisbane) believed that Gilbert should be chosen by the selectors as long "as he is deemed efficient, and his pace that creates the bumpy ball, should not in itself mean his disqualification."\(^{40}\)

---

\(^{36}\) Ezra ('Boxer') Wyeth, personal correspondence, op.cit.

\(^{37}\) The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 7 January 1936: 9.

\(^{38}\) The Telegraph (Sydney), 4 January 1992: 4.

\(^{39}\) ibid., 4 January 1936: 13.

\(^{40}\) ibid., 7 January 1936: 9.
'Five Ways,' of *The Bulletin*, summed up Eddie Gilbert's southern tour.

Doubtless Gilbert has had his last tour with a Queensland team. He has been a failure this season, though rotten slip fielding had something to do with it; his average to the end of the Sydney match is 70, his tally of wickets being eight. One handicap he works under is his seclusion for most of the year in a country mission station. He gets no match practice in good company.\(^\text{41}\)

---

The next Shield match, from the 10th to the 14th of January 1936, saw Queensland play against South Australia in Brisbane. Gilbert was included in the Queensland team and the crowd were to see Gilbert and Bradman clash for the third time, with Bradman having to "face Eddie Gilbert's shotgun deliveries and [he] never showed himself comfortable against them." It would be an interesting contest between them even though Bradman had one of his less impressive batting performances.

The Courier-Mail (Brisbane) was to point out how the Queensland cricket public would be interested in seeing Gilbert perform when Bradman was to bat in Brisbane:

It is obvious that Gilbert has been deeply discussed, and that the fairness of his methods has been doubted, even if given only limited challenge. What effect will it have on Gilbert? Will he lose his fire and effectiveness? Will he, in the face of some of the things that have been written and said, go to extremes as many allege Jardine and Larwood did in a mood of hostility and resentment at the critics? Or will he be encouraged to "gird his ebony loins" and think out a plan, in unison with a perfectly legitimate field and fair deliveries, to give the peerless Don "the works" within the fairest limits and spirit of the game.

As a result of all the talk about the fierceness of fast bowling, and the suggestions of deliberate unfairness, the judgement of many has been warped. If Gilbert is to suffer amidst all this controversy by going to either of the extremes of being unwittingly unfair or foolishly ineffective, through being mentally and physically "hoppled," it would be better to admit that cricket is made for all the batting record-breakers, and not play Gilbert at all. On the other hand, if the members of the Queensland eleven have the admiration for Gilbert that recent public utterances suggest, they should all get loyally behind him, prepare to set a field that is fair and within the spirit of the game, and give Gilbert every chance to get wickets, with catches behind.

Queensland made a feeble showing against South Australia and was beaten outright by 10 wickets and 1 run. The drawing power of Bradman resulted in a record Shield attendance of 15,716 people on the first day. The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), in an article that underestimates the

---


43 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 6 January, 1936: 8.
When South Australia played here last season the gate-takings on the Saturday were about £300. The Q.C.A. had no Bradman-Gilbert duel to entice the crowd then. On Saturday the prospects of a sensation brought them in such droves that the gate was worth £1800. Who will say, in the face of this, that the star [Bradman] is not worthy of his hire.**

Bradman, who had scored three successive centuries in Shield cricket, won the toss and surprised by sending Queensland in. Queensland made scores of 205 and 163 while South Australia scored 340 and no wicket for 29. In Queensland’s first innings wickets fell frequently even though six players scored more than 20. Top-score was Rogers with a confident 39. The surprise of the Queensland batting was provided by Eddie Gilbert who was given his ‘usual cheer’ until he was ready to face the bowler.

Gilbert, the last man in, created the surprise of the innings by taking the mastery away from the bowlers. He electrified the crowd by scoring two successive boundaries off Ward, but was dropped by the bowler off the third delivery. Then he lifted a ball, which luckily, fell just short of the reach of Bradman, and afterwards he got Ryan away for two boundaries. He scored 20 runs in six minutes, and his carefree methods of dealing with bowlers who had previously dominated the batsmen appealed to the crowd, which roared its appreciation after every stroke. Gilbert’s merry display was cut as the result of Muhl being caught by Walker off Wall, the aboriginal being not out for 22, scored in 15 minutes.45

Ward (4 for 52, off 14 overs) was the best bowler and kept a good length.

The South Australian innings was to total 340. With the fifth ball of his second over Gilbert secured Parker’s wicket, the batsman being caught by Allen, at second slip. The ball rebounded out of the fieldsman’s hand at the first attempt, but he made a brilliant recovery.

44 ibid., 13 January 1936: 15.

45 ibid., 8.
The pre-lunch dismissal of Parker caused Bradman's name to be hoisted on the board as the next batsman, and, even while the players and umpires were walking in to lunch, the radio was rushing the news over the ether [sic] that Bradman would have to face Gilbert's next ball on the resumption. Immediately the rush to Woolloongabba started. No wonder the crowd quickly grew to record dimensions for a Shield game.

All through the luncheon hour the buzz of conversation suggested that all were wondering what would happen when Bradman faced Gilbert.46

When the Queensland team left the field for lunch ‘Boxer' Wyeth witnessed an extraordinary sight:

As I made my way into the building I saw Don sitting in an alcove with his pads on. His face was very white. For me it said he was in trouble and he fell down to size for me. He was concerned about Eddie. There had been trouble for some time because of his criticism of Eddie and he expected Eddie to take care of it.47

After lunch a surprise was in store for the crowd and the Queensland team when the number four batsman (Ryan) came into bat instead of Bradman "and immediately the silly things began to flow from misjudging tongues."48 Harry Sunderland, writing for The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), sought to explain the reasoning behind Bradman's actions.

Bradman had shown the white feather! "The squib won't face Gilbert, was how some of the chatterers expressed themselves. They never considered that Bradman had played a clever card in sizing up the situation, in all its psychological phases, and decided, in view of the considered value to his side, that he would foil all Gilbert's excited anticipation by doing the most unexpected. Gilbert's stored up "desire" would burst, and would lose its sting in the time that might elapse before Bradman came. The change in the batting order planned it that way. What need Bradman care for the derision, so long as the team he played for was best served."49

46 ibid., 15.

47 Ezra ('Boxer') Wyeth, personal correspondence, op.cit. Ezra Wyeth was a teacher who went to the United States after World War Two and completed his doctorate. He followed an academic career there.

48 ibid.

49 ibid.
A few minutes after the start of play Baddock pulled a ball from Thomsett on to his wicket. As Bradman came out to bat with "the same steady, slow, studied gait which is characteristic of him," the record crowd, many of whom had travelled long distances in the expectation of seeing him make a good score, cheered him to the wicket.

The Telegraph (Brisbane) said:

And a babble of tongues broke loose as Christy immediately brought on Gilbert again. Would Gilbert repeat his sensational feat of the 1931 series.

...these thoughts were passing through the midst of the crowd who filled every available seat in the ground and stood in solid rows in the outer...

The batting efforts of Bradman would be long remembered by those who saw it. Although the Queensland bowling was fairly poor "Bradman made it look magnificent" as the ball beat his bat several times. The Bulletin reported that Bradman "had given a couple of chances of stumping," before he was finally out.

The Courier-Mail (Brisbane) believed that Ryan, with adroit manoeuvring, "deliberately kept Bradman away from the strike." The Referee later disagreed with this assessment:

It is written that Bradman's partner at the wicket, A.J. ("Buller") Ryan, shepherded the champion from Gilbert's express deliveries by manoeuvring him away from the strike. This is not borne out by the facts. At no stage while he was at the wickets, did Bradman's demeanour indicate he did not want to face Gilbert.

50 ibid., 15.
51 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 11 January 1936: 4.
52 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 13 January 1936: 15.
54 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 13 January 1936: 8.
55 The Referee, 14 January 1936: 10.
Figure 8.4. 'An Artist’s Sidelight on Shield Cricket' - Queensland versus South Australia.

Figure 8.5. Gilbert, the batsman, attacking the South Australian bowling.
Bradman eventually faced Gilbert, and off the first ball he played a shot which sent the ball straight to Wyeth in the gully. "But it was a bump ball. What a sensation there would have been had that first shot been straight to the fieldsman, and not a bump ball!" \(^56\) "Gilbert paused as if to take aim, and his second ball, sweeping high, made Bradman retreat legwards to avoid it." \(^57\)

Gilbert did not have the opportunity to bowl to Bradman much and from the next four balls that Bradman was to face from Gilbert he scored four runs (1 two and 2 singles).

Drinks were brought out later in the play and Gilbert, who had not bowled for a little while, was given the ball to have "one more chance at the master batsmen." \(^58\) It would prove to be a most eventful over. Gilbert had already had two turns at the bowling crease and had not bowled "anything which could be questioned on the score of fairness." \(^59\) On returning for this third session he had the 'wonderful' result of having Bradman caught off his first delivery. This was the seventh ball that Bradman had received from Gilbert and it "rose quickly, though it was not a bodyliner, and was pushed to Wyeth near the mouth of the gully for an easy catch." The Referee, in its description of the 'fatal' ball, reported that "Don drew away a little to leg as if to let it go past but, getting over the ball with arms extended, steered it straight to the fieldsman." \(^60\)

\(^{56}\) The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 13 January 1936: 15.

\(^{57}\) The Sporting Globe, 15 January 1936: 8.

\(^{58}\) The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 13 January 1936: 15.

\(^{59}\) ibid.

\(^{60}\) The Referee, 16 January 1936: 9. 'Boxer' Wyeth has said:
One of my proudest possessions is a picture of myself catching Don Bradman. I was at third man. The picture shows Don with his bat near his shoulders. He was standing on the leg side of the wicket. - Ezra ('Boxer') Wyeth, personal correspondence, 25 March 1992. Wyeth was a left-hand orthodox spinner.
"The roar that proclaimed Bradman's dismissal could have been heard blocks away," but perhaps many in the crowd would have been disappointed in seeing Bradman being dismissed. The fieldsmen rushed up to congratulate Gilbert, who for the second time in his career, had captured the wicket of the world's greatest batsman. Bradman, who was never comfortable at any stage in his innings, "showed an inclination to get [step] away from behind the ball," and had apparently mis-judged the height of the ball. He batted for 47 minutes in making 31 runs.

Because of the nature of his dismissal and from the way he had faced up earlier to a keen and confident Gilbert, Bradman demonstrated that he was not "partial to fast bowling, even without a leg field." He had looked as though "he was anxious to hit Gilbert away from the bowling crease, but the aboriginal won the contest."

Harry Sunderland, writing for the The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), was to suggest:

And so ends the story of the finest duel between Bradman and Gilbert. One duel I can recall resulted in the "Black Panther from Barambah" disposing of Bradman for a duck. What might it develop into when they meet again? There is such a thing as a bowler having the Indian sign on certain batsmen.

The Telegraph (Brisbane) was to indicate that there were those who were not satisfied with the way in which Bradman handled Gilbert. "Why did he pull away instead of getting behind the ball...is he afraid of the fast stuff." "The manner of his [Bradman's] dismissal on Saturday.

---

61 Truth (Brisbane), 12 January 1936: 2.
62 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 13 January 1936: 8.
64 Truth (Brisbane), 12 January 1936: 2.
65 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 13 January, 1936: 15.
66 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 13 January 1936: 12.
was tragic, for the stroke was worthy only of some mediocre batsman in a junior eleven.\textsuperscript{67}

‘Not Out,’ of The Referee, in defence of Bradman, said:

That Bradman made only 31 instead of 310, is due to no particular cause beyond the fact that he was playing cricket. Bradman is human. Superficial cricketers have an idea he is more than human. Even Bradman is liable to come down to ordinary levels occasionally without any reason.\textsuperscript{68}

At the end of an eventful day L.H. Kearney, of The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), under the heading of, ‘GILBERT AGAIN GETS BRADMAN,’ was to write:

The bowling feat of Eddie Gilbert overshadowed everything else in Queensland’s out-cricket. I have seen him bowl much faster, and with more hostility off the pitch, but for well-sustained effort and accuracy he has done nothing finer in his Sheffield Shield career. He got no assistance from the wicket, which throughout was lifeless. He was used more than any other Queensland bowler, and the fact that his 18 overs included six maidens shows clearly how he commanded the respect of the batsmen.\textsuperscript{69}

Ryan, with 119, not out, was the ‘star’ for South Australia. After a shaky start he made the match safe for his team. Apart from Gilbert, the Queensland bowling attack was not up to first-class standards. Gilbert ended up with the fine figures of 5 wickets for 87, off 29 overs, with 6 maidens. It was his best figures of the season. Wyeth pegged away steadily in taking 3 for 101.

The 163 scored in Queensland’s second innings was a pretty poor effort with Gunthorpe (46) and Hansen (35) being the top-scorers. Ward, with the figures of 3 for 36 and Waite with 3 for 44 were the main wicket-takers for South Australia. Ward had the tremendous match figures of 7 for 88. In their second innings South Australia scored the 29 required without loss.

\textsuperscript{67} ibid.

In seeking explanation for Don Bradman’s not turning on another century against Queensland in Brisbane, some Brisbane critics have drawn on their imagination. As if Bradman, with his figurative string of centuries, has not done enough against them. The Referee, 23 January 1936: 9.

\textsuperscript{68} The Referee, 23 January 1936: 9.

\textsuperscript{69} The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 13 January 1936: 8.
In reviewing the match for Queensland, the Truth (Brisbane) said:

Our bowling, without Eddie Gilbert would be like a ship without a rudder. Eddie on a wicket which was distinctly favorable to the batsman, being slow and easy, bowled magnificently and had all the batsmen thinking.

Never has the aboriginal been seen to better advantage and his bowling dominated the match.  

After the match Gilbert was to be acclaimed as the fastest bowler in Australia and was compared with Tim Wall, the Australian opening bowler. The main difference between the two was the fact that Wall took a longer run to develop his pace.

Before the last match of the season, against Victoria, concerns were raised by the Q.C.A. about the failure of the Queensland team during the season. The Q.C.A. president (J.S. Hutcheon) appointed a sub-committee to look at the problem. "Our players are not good enough," he remarked, "and the remedy is to make them better if we can."

The Telegraph (Brisbane), in a comment on Queensland cricket, was to suggest:

The poor results in the Shield is the reason why country cricket in this State has assumed a more important standing than in any other Shield States.

In the south, for instance, they would not think of choosing in their team players like Allen of Toowoomba, or Gilbert of Murgon.

There was discussion about the need for things such as a new bowler; that the players were unfit; that the selectors lacked vision; and, the necessity for "regular practice on the finest wickets

70 Truth (Brisbane), 12 January 1936: 2.

71 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 13 January 1936: 20.

72 The Sporting Globe, 12 February 1936: 8. It was suggested by Mr. W.H. Henley, former treasurer of the Q.C.A. that "it would be a good business proposition to pay a large amount to secure the services of a player like Constantine or Nourse" despite the fact that Queensland had sought "such a player for many years, and has found it very difficult to find him."

73 ibid.
It was announced that it intended to bring to the city two or three of the best
country players, who would be given experience by "taking part in the metropolitan competition
for a period." It was hoped that, in the long term, this would help build up the standard of the
State team. There would, of course, be some expenditure involved. Some months later Gilbert
would be one of the players involved in this scheme.

The Queensland selectors undertook the unusual course of naming eighteen players to
practice. The idea may have been good but The Sporting Globe cynically suggested that "if more
than half of them do so, that will be unusual." The Referee, under the heading, 'WHAT
AILS Q'LAND IN CRICKET?,' and the sub-heading of, 'Get-Together-One Man-Spirit Must Be
Created,' suggested: "The whole system of organising the first-class cricket of the State needs
revision." It went on to propose various actions including, "regular practice on the finest
wickets procurable."

On the 25th of January Gilbert was sent a notice by the Q.C.A.

You have been chosen as a Member of the Queensland Representative
Team to meet Victoria in the Sheffield Shield Match to be played at the Brisbane
Cricket Ground, commencing on Saturday 1st February.

You are hereby requested to notify me in writing as to whether you will
be available for this match, and will you kindly treat this matter as urgent.

Practice Nets will be available for the Team on Tuesday and Thursday
next at which you will be expected to attend.

R. T. Stephens

74 ibid.
75 ibid.
76 The Sporting Globe, 22 January 1936: 8.
77 The Referee, 23 January 1936: 10.
78 ibid.
Figure 8.6. Wyeth takes the catch to dismiss Bradman off the bowling of Gilbert.

Queensland Vs. South Australia.
Played at Brisbane. January 10th to 14th, 1936.
Q. 205 163
SA. 340 0/29
New South Wales won by 10 wickets and 1 run.
E. Gilbert: 5 for 87 0 for 11

Figure 8.7. Queensland versus South Australia - match summary.
Just before the match, and while staying at the Hotel Carlton, Gilbert wrote to a Mr. Keen, apparently of the Department. It was a short note that was to outline his future hopes and concerns:

To Mr. Keen

I am asking you. Will you kindly notify the Q.C.A. would they be kind enough to obtain a Job for me in Brisbane if not I will make this my last match.

E. Gilbert (Signature).

Figure 8.8. Personal note written by Gilbert.

79 Eddie Gilbert, personal file information, op.cit., 1936. Discussion of Gilbert's financial problems and career prospects have been outlined elsewhere.
The match, in early February, against visiting Victoria, proved to be a "dragging, wearisome affair," which was not particularly well attended. The low attendance figures were in contrast to the previous match against South Australia in which Bradman had played. Victoria defeated Queensland in the match by 252 runs on the first innings, and, "with a little more enterprise, would have won outright."

In the first innings the Queenslanders 'scraped' together an uninspiring and moderate 194 on an easy wicket. Cook had a careful but fortunate innings of 41 and Christy played solidly for 36 when he was run out. Gilbert went out to bat in the midst of wild applause from the outer as well as the grandstand but, after scoring 3 runs, "All he succeeded in doing was to hit a tremendous skier which Lee, in the covers, held safely after waiting a long time for it to come down." Wickets were shared by all the Victorian bowlers, with Plant being best with 4 for 41.

Victoria took no unnecessary risks in amassing their total of 446 runs. As had become usual, Gilbert provided an early sensation.

Rigg was shaping up very confidently against the aboriginal, when a delivery, somewhat on the short side, hit him a painful blow just under the elbow, causing him to drop his bat and retire.

Rigg resumed his innings the next day.

Victoria's main batsmen performed well. Scaife (99) and Lee (95) just missed their deserved centuries. In his innings Scaife punished the bowlers mercilessly. Gregory demonstrated promise as an all-rounder when he put together 59 in very good style and was the

---

80 The Bulletin, 12 February 1936: 36.
81 Ibid.
82 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 1 February 1936: 4.
83 Truth (Brisbane), 2 February 1936: 5.
only batsman to deal effectively with Gilbert's short balls. Gilbert, a 'mainstay' of Queensland cricket, was the best of the Queensland bowlers and he maintained his pace throughout. He gave a "lion-hearted [courageous] effort" and had the good figures of 5 wickets for 109, off 32 overs, while Cook took 3 wickets for 93. Gilbert's career had been dogged by poor catching and the fact that all of his wickets in this innings were catches off his bowling is worth noting. In one catch, "Gregory's wonderful innings ended when he snicked Gilbert fairly wide, and Tallon made a remarkable catch, getting the ball as he fell to the ground." In another, "When Newstead had made three he was out to another excellent catch when he punched Gilbert very hard, and Christy, at silly mid-on, took the ball with one hand."

In their second turn at bat Queensland made no effort at all to force the pace of the game in making 6 declared for 478. The undoubted highlight of the innings was the superlative effort by Tallon (193). All other batsmen reached double figures, a rare event for Queensland at the time. Other good scores were the 72 by Hansen and the 56, not out, by Cook. The Victorian bowlers toiled for wickets and Plant, Welsh, and Gregory took 2 wickets each.

Victoria faced 226 in the second innings with two-and-a-half-hours to bat. "Gilbert opened the Queensland attack impressively by dismissing Quinn with the fifth ball of his second over." The Victorian batsman gave Rogers at close leg a 'sitter' of a catch. Quinn appeared to question Umpire Scott's decision against him, but it was obvious that the ball had kicked off the shoulder of the bat into the fieldsman's hands. An outright win was possible for Victoria had they gone for the runs, but in the end they finished the match with 2 wickets down for 179 runs.

---

84 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 4 February 1936: 8.
85 ibid.
86 ibid.
87 ibid., 6 February 1936: 8.
Riggs' 78, not out, was a solid effort. Gilbert took 1 for 33 and Wyeth secured 1 for 38.

After the match The Herald (Melbourne) was to outline the comments made about the play:

Trenchant criticism of the anti-climax in the Shield match at Brisbane yesterday was freely expressed in Melbourne today. "Disgraceful"..."Poor cricket"...Sadly unenterprising." These were some of the descriptions applied by prominent officials to the tame ending to a game that had promised to provide a sporting finish.

The dominant impression in Melbourne today was that in their second innings Victorian batsmen had failed lamentably to appreciate the need for quick runs regardless of the loss of wickets, and that they should have gone flat out while a shred of hope of retaining the Shield remained.

There is also a suspicion that, with the next Tests looming, there was a tendency among batsmen to play for self instead of for the side.

Queensland too, cannot be absolved from blame. Their stodgy batting yesterday was in sharp contrast to that on Tuesday, and did not reflect any great desire to force an outright decision.**

At the time of the match Eddie Gilbert was at a peak of his popularity but little did he, or Queensland cricket supporters for that matter, realise, that when he walked off the field at the end of play on the 5th of February 1936, that future events would result in this being his last game of cricket for Queensland. Sometimes the most significant events in a person's life go unrealised and for Gilbert this would be the case. Walking through the gate leading off the field, Queensland cap possibly in hand, it was, in some respects, the beginning of his slide into obscurity.

Queensland would lose a player and the Aboriginal inhabitants of Cherbourg would lose their hero and 'torch-bearer' in the white world.

Much to the dismay of supporters of cricket in Queensland the State team finished a disappointing last in the 1936 Sheffield Shield season. The Bulletin said: "The cricket chronicler

** The Herald (Melbourne), 6 February 1936: 42.
of one of the Brisbane dailies put as good a face upon Queensland's position as possible: remarking that the State occupied fourth place, he passed on to other things. Queensland's batting averages for the season were headed by Don Tallon with 55.8 while the best bowling figures were Eddie Gilbert's 19 wickets at 36.84. In a review of the Shield season The Referee suggested that Gilbert is a "good bowler if tactics are mapped out." It went on to say:

On Sydney form Gilbert was quite the best Queensland bowler on a true wicket. But his tactics were quite faulty. In the last two matches in Brisbane he obtained much improved results and this may have been due to better tactics than were adopted in the first three matches.

He should be persevered with now that he has shown stamina, the ability to keep a fairly good length, and to return his pace off the pitch. A stable, secure and happy home life is often seen as supporting a sportsperson's career. Unfortunately this was not the case for Gilbert. In contrast to his reported behaviour and achievements with the state cricket team, back at Cherbourg events in Gilbert's personal life were to continue to be unsettled. During February he sought permission to marry T...G..., a lady who was much older than him, with 4 children, and who lived at Purga, near Ipswich. At the same time he also expressed a desire to obtain a divorce or separation from his wife 'Edie' because she was "running after men and [he] wishes to get rid of her." Eddie had not lived with 'Edie' for some considerable time and "she was guilty of associations with various other men which, he states is common knowledge on the settlement." He had no desire of ever going back to her

89 The Bulletin, 19 February 1936: 36.
80 The Referee, 13 February 1936: 12.
91 ibid.
92 Eddie Gilbert, personal file information, op.cit.
93 ibid., memorandum 29 January 1936.
94 ibid.
and indicated that "not only is she of unclean habits, but that he suspects that she associates with
men suffering from disease and possible may have disease herself."\textsuperscript{95} In defence of 'Edie'
Superintendent Semple was to state:

I have no knowledge of Edie running after other men, but Gilbert got a thrashing from Jacob C...for running after his wife, and that was one of my reasons for getting him employment at Gympie which he did not keep. Gilbert was also after G...R... and T...C... and other girls too numerous to mention, and it was over G...R... that Gilbert [sic] and his wife quarrelled. Edie is not to blame, at least not altogether. Gilbert would not stay with the girl G... 5 minutes if there were other girls about.

I will see Dr. Davisdon about her, although Miss Hardgraves the acting Matron advises that Edie is in quite good health.\textsuperscript{96}

The request to marry the lady from Purga was ‘not entertained’ by the Department and it was suggested that this would not unduly worry Gilbert because if he got the chance he "would not think twice to go after others."\textsuperscript{97} The problems in Gilbert's private life were not known to the general public. For example, after the southern tour, The Referee had reported: "He complained of Melbourne’s cold weather and may be glad to get back to sunny Queensland and to his young wife."\textsuperscript{98}

During March 1936, a Country Week carnival was conducted in Brisbane. The question of playing Eddie Gilbert and Tom Allen, both interstate players, caused one member of the organising committee to suggest that "their inclusion would defeat the object of Country

\textsuperscript{95}i\textit{bid}. This comment indicates an awareness of problems related to sexually transmitted diseases on the settlement.

\textsuperscript{96}i\textit{bid}. There is enough evidence to suggest a degree of violence was involved in Gilbert’s relationships with other people.

\textsuperscript{97}i\textit{bid}.

\textsuperscript{98}The Referee, 25 January 1936: 15.
However, other members argued that "these players should be allowed to participate as they were truly country representatives, would test the abilities of other players, and would be an attraction to the sporting public."\(^{100}\)

The first matches were played on the 24th of March. Eddie Gilbert, playing for a Combined Associations' team against the team from the Far North at Langlands Park, "skittled the opposition to the tune of five wickets for nine, and then top-scored for his side with a breezy 43."\(^{101}\) Far North batted first and were all out for 46. Edmonds (23) played an astute innings and was the only batsman to reach double figures. Combined Associations scored 130 runs, with Dall scoring 23. Kogler had the best bowling figures for Far North with 6 for 42. In the Far North's second innings Gilbert took 3 wickets for one run, "but then the Cairns left-hander, W. Kerby, summed him up, and finished unbeaten, with a nice half-century, which included five 4's."\(^{102}\) Far North finally totalled 7 wickets for 79 before a successful appeal was made against the light shortly after 5.30 p.m. when Gilbert was bowling. Gilbert had the final figures of 4 for 15 as the Combined Association's team recorded a win by 84 runs on the first innings.

In the next match the Maroochy-Gympie side defeated the Combined Association's team at Langlands Park by 118 runs on the first innings. Maroochy-Gympie had first turn at bat and compiled 213 (for 6 declared). Sorensen played an enterprising innings to score 129 runs in 121 minutes. Gilbert bowled 13 overs, including 4 maidens, but failed to secure a wicket. Kelly was the most successful bowler with 2 wickets for 57. Combined Association's players mustered a total of only 95, with the main contributors being Graham with 36 and Ogilive with 23. Colley

\(^{99}\) The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 20 March 1936: 9.

\(^{100}\) ibid.

\(^{101}\) ibid., 25 March 1936: 7.

\(^{102}\) ibid.
took 4 wickets for 16 and O'Hanlon had the figures of 4 for 35. At the end of the game Maroochy-Gympie were one wicket for 46 with Walker 26, not out. O'Grady took the only second innings wicket to fall for a cost of 7 runs.\footnote{ibid., 26 March 1936: 10.}

Combined Association’s team opposed the strong batting line-up of the Darling Downs in the next match. Batting first, the Downs team scored 203 for the loss of eight wickets, when the time limit forced them to declare their innings closed. D. Allen played splendidly for 61. Gilbert sent down 15 overs, and captured 5 wickets for 55. Bell took 2 for 29. The players of the Combined Association’s team, with the exception of Winchester, who made 44, and Ogilive, who scored 26, made a feeble effort against the bowling of T. Allen, Waterson and Maddern. Allen, the interstate slow bowler, was in particularly good form and captured 6 wickets for 36, off 10 overs. In their second innings Combined Associations were 1 for 60 at the close of play. Darling Downs won the match by 89 runs on the first innings.\footnote{ibid., 27 March 1936: 10.}

After the Darling Downs match Gilbert was selected to play for South Queensland in a 12 a-side Match against North Queensland. On a firm, but not particularly lively wicket, the teams provided some interesting cricket in the final match of the country series. North Queensland batted first and Gilbert was to be the spearhead of the South Queensland attack. He took his first wicket for nil, Hunt being caught off him at deep slip. Edmonds was dropped off his bowling when he had made 3 and went on to make 82. In the end Gilbert secured 5 for 103, but had four chances dropped off his bowling. Kerby batted with patience and style to make 101 (retired) in the North Queensland total of 361 for 10 wickets (declared). The second day of the match was characterised by the sound batting of the South Queensland team, who made a total of 273 runs, but this total was to prove to be insufficient to avoid a first innings defeat by North Queensland.
The best batting performance for South Queensland was the impressive 105 (retired) by Ogilive, of Texas. A fine feature of the match was the bowling of Carr, from Cairns, who took 6 wickets for 56 runs off 110 balls. The end of the match brought to a conclusion a successful Country Week carnival.  

On the Monday following the Country Carnival Gilbert was back in action when he turned out for a Q.C.A team in a 12 a-side match against Gympie. The Q.C.A. team defeated Gympie by 118 runs on the first innings after Gympie had batted first and compiled 232 runs. Lindsay was top-scorer for Gympie with a brilliant 101 runs, while W. Tallon took 4 for 63. Gilbert, after bowling 3 overs, left the field, because of an injured hand, and a substitute took his place. The Q.C.A. compiled 350 runs with Rogers, the young opener, making a superb 130 runs before retiring. Fisher made 48 (retired) and D. Tallon scored 47 runs (retired). Gilbert made 18 before he also retired. White had the best bowling result for Gympie with 3 for 83.

During the Country carnival Gilbert was selected by Mr. J.H. Holdsworth, State selector and captain for Toombul, to play in a team to tour North Queensland during early April. The side included seven interstate players and two interstate Colts.

The first match on the tour was a two-day match at Rockhampton, the town which was the centre of the ‘colour bar’ controversy a year earlier. In the match between Southern Queensland and Rockhampton the game was won by the home team by 70 runs on the first innings. The Southern Queensland (Q.C.A.) team had first use of the wicket on the Saturday but started disastrously, with 8 wickets falling for 57 runs, before being all out for 185. Gunthorpe compiled 44 and T. Allen scored 42. Gilbert made 19, not out. Christ was the best of the local bowlers with 8 for 61. Rockhampton experienced little trouble in making the required score, though Gilbert had most of the batsmen in trouble. Rockhampton’s good score of 255 was

---

mainly due to a fine innings by Barnes, who scored 130. Christ was 35, not out, at the end of the innings. Gilbert was easily the best of the Southern bowlers. He secured 6 wickets for 51, off 16 overs, and bowled up to his best form. The fielding was not up to a good standard, and four chances were put down. In their second attempt the southern cricketers did much better, stumps being drawn with the score at 217 for 5 wickets. Allen showed good form for 77, while Gunthorpe remained unconquered for 56. Greenough, for Rockhampton, captured 2 wickets for 46.106

The Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton) summarised Gilbert's performance:

Among the visitors, Gilbert was the star performer. On Saturday afternoon he contributed 19 not out at a time when runs were sorely needed, and on Sunday he took six wickets for 51. In the field on Sunday he was sound; in fact spectators wondered just how the visitors would have fared against the local men without the fast bowler, so poorly did they shape.

Gilbert did not worry the local batsmen as might have been expected. He started off bowling into the wind, but he soon changed over to get the advantage by bowling with the wind. At first his pace was not unusually fast, but he warmed up, and during the game sent down some lightning deliveries. Notwithstanding his pace, the local batsmen refused to be overawed and in one over Gilbert had 15 knocked off him.107

After the match a dinner was held at the Commercial Hotel in honour of the visitors. The chairman of the dinner was Mr. W.H. Kettle, the person who was the centre of controversy with comments he had made about Gilbert a year before. It would be interesting to know what he said in his welcome speech.

The next match of the tour was played at Sarina on the 7th of April and was played on a concrete wicket with a canvas matting. The match proved to be a 'red-letter' day for Sarina after nearby Mackay had been able to arrange a match. The match "created great interest among the

106 The Sunday-Mail (Brisbane), 5 April 1936: 16; The Courier-Mail, 6 April 1936: 12.
107 The Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton), 6 April 1936.
public [and this] was indicated by the large gathering of spectators and the cluster of cars around the ground."\textsuperscript{108} The Sarina team, batting first, were dismissed for 104. Graham (26) and McKenzie (10, not out) were the only players to reach double figures. O'Connor, who took 5 for 34, was the most successful bowler for the visitors. Gilbert took 1 wicket for 10. The Southern Queensland team opened their innings poorly, Jerrard and Tallon losing their wickets cheaply, before Rogers and Allen, in a fine display of big hitting, carried the score past the Sarina total before being separated. Rogers (66) hit 4 sixes and 4 fours, and Allen (83, not out) clouted 6 sixes and 3 fours. Gilbert was bowled by Graham for no score as the visitors made 175 for the loss of 7 wickets. O'Grady did the best for the local in capturing 3 wickets for 36.\textsuperscript{109}

The Mackay Daily Mercury, in its match report, was to refer to Gilbert's behaviour during the game. It provides a different and interesting insight:

When the home team was batting, a black dog of doubtful parentage wandered on the field to inspect the visitors at close range. There was a ripple of laughter when Eddie Gilbert bent to pick up an imaginary stone to throw at the dog, but the dog took the action seriously and beat a hasty retreat, only to return shortly after and wander from player to player, undeterred by juvenile calls of "Here Fido!" or "Come, Pluto!"\textsuperscript{110}

Townsville was the venue for the next two matches, against Townsville and North Queensland, respectively. These matches were part of an Easter cricket carnival. The first match was against the Townsville team and the match commenced in ideal weather conditions on a wicket that was hard and dry. Southern Queensland captain, Christy, won the toss and elected to have first use of the wicket. The visitors compiled a total of 318. Top-scorer was Christy with 83. Gilbert made 6 before being caught out. Although Horn, with 3 for 55, was the most successful bowler for

\textsuperscript{108} The Mackay Daily Mercury, 6 April 1936.

\textsuperscript{109} The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 8 April: 10.

\textsuperscript{110} The Mackay Daily Mercury, 6 April: 1.
Townsville, Kogler, the slow bowler of the team, proved to be the most difficult to play. In reply to the Southern Queensland total Townsville made 254. Baker gave a forceful and stylish display in making 97. O'Connor, with 6 good wickets for 59, took the bowling honours. The Townsville Daily Bulletin, in commenting on Gilbert's performance towards the end of the first day of play, suggested that he "lacked fire in his initial attempt and when Christy signalled him back at 5.40 [p.m.], Lyons appealed against the light and the visiting captain sportingly threw [the ball] to O'Connor." Gilbert had Lyons out playing back to the second ball on the next day of play. He finished the innings with one wicket for 62.

The visitors opened their second innings with a lead of 64. With the game already decided a lot of interest had gone out of the game but this did not stop the visitors from giving a display of bright batting. The game ended when the Southern Queensland team were dismissed for 191. Tallon scored 58 and Gunthorpe made 57 before being run out. When he had scored six runs, Gilbert was stumped by Armit off the bowling of Kogler. Eight bowlers were used and three of these, Horn (2 for 19), J. Lyons (2 for 27), and Hackett (2 for 21), shared the bowling honours.

In contrast to the weather conditions for the previous match the weather conditions for the match against North Queensland were anything but good. The North Queenslanders were sent in to bat. An injured Gilbert and Rushbrook were the opening bowlers, "but Gilbert's soreness still troubled him and he was only persevered with for short intervals." The Northern team were dismissed for 162 with the top-scorers being Tait with 38 and Kerby with 24. The bowling honours for Southern Queensland were divided between Rushbrook, La Franz, and Gilbert, each

111 The Townsville Daily Bulletin, 11 April 1936: 11.
112 The North Queensland Register, 11 April 1936: 84.
113 ibid.
taking 3 wickets, but Rushbrook was the best bowler on the day. Tallon, the wicketkeeper, claimed 5 victims. Rain fell overnight, but the wicket, although soft, was easy when play commenced. The early batsmen failed to take advantage of this and made the task a difficult one for later batsmen. North Queensland 'squeezed' home after an exciting finish to the first innings and this was to eventually allow North Queensland to win the match. McColm and Gilbert had added 19 to bring the total to within 3 of the required total, "the aboriginal being run out on the last wicket." Gilbert had made 4 runs. Christy was to return the best score for his side with 52. Tait (3 for 53), Baker (2 for 24) and Andison (3 for 19) made great use of the wicket to record good figures. North Queensland made 91 in their second innings, with Tait top-scoring with 29. O'Connor, for the visitors, bowled well and took 7 for 37, off 9.4 overs. Gilbert had the bowling figures of none for 6. Requiring 94 runs to win the match outright in 60 minutes, the Southerners were faced with the difficult task due to a worn wicket and failing light. However, an attempt was made to get the runs, but after 4 wickets fell cheaply an appeal against the light was upheld. Tallon scored 9 and Tait took 3 for 18. North Queensland were victorious.

The team returned back to Brisbane on the 15th of April and Gilbert went back to the settlement after a hectic few months of cricket. He would have desperately needed a rest from cricket but his previous behaviour at the settlement and the likelihood of the same or worse would have been a concern to the officials at the settlement. It is ironic that, in many respects, the settlement officials, and the system they represented, helped to create the conditions which were to contribute to some of Gilbert's 'problems.'

\[114\] ibid.
The Chief Protector of Aboriginals, in his Report for 1936, was to make his usual mention of sport about the Cherbourg settlement.

The settlement cricket teams have been pre-eminent in the district for the past four years, and are again premiers.

Sports meetings are held to assist in raising funds.\(^{115}\)

At Murgon were apparently some plans to develop a turf wicket and Gilbert was seen as an authority on the matter. The Murgon Daily News quoted Robert Crawford, of the settlement, as suggesting that "Eddie Gilbert claims there was a soil on the Cherbourg Aboriginal Settlement which closely resembles the soil used in the metropolitan area."\(^{116}\)

In the early part of September 1936 the State selectors, based on earlier recommendations about providing opportunities in Brisbane for good country players, approached the Chief Protector of Aboriginals to see if Eddie Gilbert could be allowed to play cricket in Brisbane. In reply it was pointed out that, for reasons not stated, Gilbert was not able to play cricket in his local competition "and in the circumstances it was necessary that he should be given the opportunity of preparing for this season's big cricket by playing regularly in Brisbane."\(^{117}\) It is likely that for some reason he was found to be ineligible to play. When the information that Gilbert "sadly lacks bowling practice"\(^{118}\) was conveyed to the Q.C.A. they were "greatly perturbed."\(^{119}\)


\(^{116}\) Murgon Daily News, 25 September 1936. The success of Gilbert undoubtedly lead to an interest and enthusiasm for cricket.

\(^{117}\) The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 10 September 1936: 11. Apparently Gilbert was banned from playing in the settlement cricket team because of his behaviour.

\(^{118}\) The Bulletin, 23 September 1936: 44.

\(^{119}\) ibid.
Memorandum.

Against these publicly expressed concerns relating to the continuation of Gilbert's cricket career were the privately express views of Superintendent Semple in memorandum to the Chief Protector of Aboriginals in Brisbane.

Should the Queensland Cricket Association make application for the services of Gilbert as their fast Bowler I would appreciate very much if you would not grant this request.

Gilbert is not a very good example of what a native should be. He is lazy and will not work also he is always in mischief with some woman.

Natives are quite aware as to Gilbert's [sic] character and his laziness and should he be given the honour of again representing the State in Cricket, more will be under the impression that they can practically do as they like, defy authority and treat laziness as a virtue and still be asked to honourably play in games[.]

It is my opinion that Cricket has done Gilbert little good. I feel quite sure and have told him so that should he have behaved himself and played the game in every respect he would not have been the little blackguard that he is but would still have been respected both on the Settlement [and outside of it?] and I would have felt glad to let him play for Queensland or anywhere else.

W. Porteus Semple (Signature).
Superintendent.120

Given the strength of Semple's comments, and bearing in mind his close association with Gilbert over a number of years, one would have thought that his opinions may have some impact.

However, this was not to be the case and a suggestion to have Gilbert move to Brisbane to play A grade cricket met with some agreement from the Home Secretary (Mr. Hanlon) and the Chief Protector of Aboriginals (Mr. Bleakley). Initially there were some problems in granting the request, with the main one being "finding suitable employment in the metropolis for the aboriginal bowler."121 There were other concerns outlined which appear to give a hint about Gilbert's behaviour.

120 Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit.
121 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 17 September 1936: 8.
The Government is being asked to allow the aboriginal to come to Brisbane for the season and play with one of the grade clubs. The difficulty lies in the fact that there are no facilities for looking after Gilbert in his non-cricketing, the abo. department not being in the least likely to allow him a free leg among the coruscating temptations of a great city.\textsuperscript{122}

The Courier-Mail (Brisbane) provided some background to a move designed to provide for his future:

Mr Hanlon said last night that the department must have regard to Gilbert’s livelihood, as cricket would not keep him when he lost his youth and prowess. He was a school teacher in the Aborigines Department, and there were difficulties in the way of his being brought to Brisbane.

It was the department’s policy and his own desire to give aborigines every encouragement to develop in sport. Cricket and football were fostered at the settlements so that aborigines would feel that they could indulge in the same games as whites. This tended to raise their opinion of themselves, and to overcome the sense of inferiority which long decades of repression and unfair treatment had instilled into their minds.\textsuperscript{123}

Soon afterwards it was announced that Gilbert would play in Brisbane.

Arrangements have now been made for Eddie Gilbert to play in metropolitan cricket. He will arrive in Brisbane during this week, and will be given employment by the Queensland Cricket Association and the Brisbane Cricket Ground trustees assisting in the preparation of the ground for the international matches.

The South Brisbane club is taking the responsibility of looking after accommodation for Gilbert, and he will play with them in the grade competitions.\textsuperscript{124}

Although The Referee suggested that he “would be engaged as coach by the Q.C.A.,”\textsuperscript{125} Gilbert, it was pointed out, would be employed as ‘ground bowler’ and be on the ground staff at the Brisbane Cricket Ground, so that he would be “given every opportunity to practise and

\textsuperscript{122} The Bulletin, 23 September 1936: 44.

\textsuperscript{123} The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), September 1936: 6.

\textsuperscript{124} The Telegraph (Brisbane), 22 September 1936: 8.

\textsuperscript{125} The Referee, 24 September 1936: 14.
prepare himself physically"\textsuperscript{126} for the Shield matches. He commenced ground duties at the Brisbane Cricket Ground on September the 28th. "His practice and physical preparation would be watched carefully and supervised by the State selectors."\textsuperscript{127} No sooner had this been announced then the Q.C.A. had a long discussion and decided that Gilbert would be provided with both employment and accommodation. He was to be paid a wage of 30 shillings a week plus certain other costs such as "the cost of accommodation in Grey Street, South Brisbane."\textsuperscript{128} These conditions were those worked out by the Q.C.A. and the Chief Protector of Aboriginals.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure89.jpg}
\caption{A section of the crowd at Woolloongabba during a Sheffield Shield match in 1936.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{126} The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 23 September 1936: 7. State players were expected to attend training on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. The team would train under the direction of Syd Redgrave until every player had batted in the nets.

\textsuperscript{127} ibid.

\textsuperscript{128} ibid.
30th September, 1936.

Sir,

Referring to verbal arrangements made with you concerning the employment of Eddie Gilbert on the Ground Staff of the Brisbane Cricket Ground, I now enclose agreement No. 5519, covering his employment as from the 28th September, 1936, at the rate of 30/- per week, which I shall be glad if you will have completed and the original copy returned to me. You will note that the whole of the wage is to be paid at this Office monthly for banking to Gilbert's credit, and any advances required by him for pocket money and for other purposes will be made at this Office.

In conformity with previous arrangements, it is to be understood that all cricketing clothing and gear required by Gilbert will be supplied at the Association's expense.

With regard to Gilbert's civilian attire, it will be recognised that his wages will not allow him to make adequate provision for these items, and it is expected, therefore, that Gilbert's first outfit will be supplied by you and any subsequent requirements supplied from his Savings Bank Account.

It is estimated that a reasonable outfit can be obtained for £5 (Five pounds) and if you are prepared to forward this sum to this Office, arrangements will be made to have the purchase effected.

These arrangements will absolve the Association from any further responsibility in regard to Gilbert's personal clothing requirements, both while in Brisbane and with the Touring Team in the South should he be selected for the Tour.

Yours faithfully,

(Initials)

Chief Protector of Aboriginals.\(^{129}\)

Even though it was the 'attitude' of the Q.C.A. that all players were "required to provide their own cricketing togs and that Gilbert should not receive favoured treatment over other players"\(^{130}\) it appears that he 'escaped' the enforcement of this condition.

---

\(^{129}\) Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit.

\(^{130}\) ibid. Agreement with Q.C.A.
Quite apart from these events the opinion was put forward that it would be an unfair advantage for a club if they were to allow Gilbert to play in the couple of games before the Shield match. The Q.C.A. agreed and passed a motion to the effect "that Gilbert be not permitted to play A grade cricket while in Brisbane." An amendment that he be allowed to play for the Colts was defeated and the original motion was "agreed to unanimously."

The Referee, under the heading, 'Do Brisbane Batsmen Fear Gilbert’s Fast Bowling?,' could not agree with the decision made by the Q.C.A.:

Q.C.A. decision to bring fast bowler E. Gilbert to Brisbane, but at the same time to debar him from participating in grade cricket is puzzling Brisbane sportsmen.

There is some feeling among sportsmen in Queensland that the decision to restrict Gilbert’s activities to net practice during his stay in Brisbane was influenced by the knowledge that some prominent batsmen are not keen to face his bowling.

If that be the case it will be interesting to see how they handle Gilbert (at his top) if called upon to face him at the practice nets.

‘Gabba,’ of The Bulletin, stated: "The native’s experience will be confined to bowling at the nets, and the essential match practice which means so much will not be permitted him - a characteristic bit of Q.C.A. stupidity." Under the heading, ‘WHY DEBAR GILBERT?,’ The Telegraph (Brisbane), also suggested that the Q.C.A. had defeated the main purpose of bringing Gilbert to Brisbane by refusing to allow him to take part in club cricket.

131 ibid.
132 ibid.
133 The Referee, 1 October 1936: 14.
134 The Bulletin, 7 October 1936: 44.
It is generally recognised among cricketers that an hour's match practice is worth a week at the nets. The principle applies to bowlers as well as batsmen; and the decision to keep Gilbert out of the grade competition is, therefore unsound, even if it does ensure that no club shall secure whatever advantage there might be in his playing for a match or two before the Shield games commence.

Behind the arguments that have influenced the decision appears to be district club rivalry for the premiership honours.

There seems to have been no reason why the aborigine should have been refused permission to play with South Brisbane. He is living in that district,...

The Q.C.A., after being criticised for its actions in banning Gilbert from club cricket, suddenly reversed its decision and agreed to allow him to play premiership cricket.

After banning Eddie Gilbert from playing in club matches during his stay in Brisbane and insisting that the abo. express bowl only at the B.C.G. nets (B.7/10/36), the Q.C.A. has turned a characteristic flip-flap and ordered the native to play with the Colts team. This has had the advantage of bringing him under the captaincy of the State coach, Brown, and the good effect of this was seen in the abo.'s first match, in which Brown gave him a lot of useful tips.

As a member of the New South Wales team Brown had played against Gilbert in the past. In a very premature statement it was believed that if Gilbert "reaches his best form, Colts should go very close to premiership honors."

Brown would make some comments about Gilbert:

His arm came over very quickly and it was hard for many people to believe that he could propel the ball so fast by bowling from a short run.

Gilbert was quite a gentleman and there was nothing wrong in the attitude of the players towards him.

Gilbert played his first match for Colts early in October in a match against Eastern Suburbs.

---

135 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 23 September 1936: 12.
136 The Bulletin, 14 October 1936: 44.
137 The Sporting Globe, 7 October 1936: 9.
138 Bill Brown, personal information, August 1989.
Colts scored 138 in their turn at bat.

Kearney, of The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), was to report:

Eddie Gilbert’s bowling at Langlands Park on Saturday was a cynosure of all eyes. He opened to Hughes and Thomson, but his first session was not at all impressive. He rarely worked himself up above medium fast and bowled too many balls, which were fanned by the bat. With none for 14 he was rested when Easts’ total was 29.

He came back 10 runs later to give the spectators a much more telling display. He secured a wicket in his first, a maiden, and second over. He finished the day with two for 18 from six overs.

...if he looks after himself and gets thoroughly fit he is likely to worry the majority of club batsmen and perhaps a few of his shield opponents.139

Brown, his captain in the Colts team, was to write in an article in the same paper:

Highly as he is rated, particularly in Queensland, it seems that Eddie Gilbert, who, with the Colts against Eastern Suburbs, played his first Brisbane grade match on Saturday, has been mis-judged.

Gilbert has the reputation of being fast but erratic. From experience it was proved to me that he is fast all right, but that he is not so erratic.

The State speed bowler has been wasting a good many deliveries on the leg side. I asked him to concentrate on or outside the off stump.

Eddie just said he would. And he did - with good results. He sent Muhl’s off stump flying, and had Pizzey caught at first slip. After that he was consistently on or about the off stump—proof enough of his accuracy.

On the Langlands Park wicket, which has been used only twice since recent top dressing, Gilbert made the ball lift in an alarming manner, and the lives of the Eastern Suburbs batsmen were in danger every time he appeared at the bowling crease. At no time during the afternoon did he bowl at top pace, and had only two short spells. But, with the training facilities now at his disposal, he will soon be fit for the bigger engagements ahead.140

In compiling their 138 Colts performed poorly against accurate bowling. Brown gave a fighting lone effort of 54. Gilbert made 8 runs. Pizzey, bowling for Eastern Suburbs, was very effective

---

139 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 22 October 1936: 10.

140 ibid., 5 October 1936: 12.
on a 'turning' wicket and secured 3 wickets for 55 and Harding took 3 for 23. Easts went on to compile 219 in their first innings. There was real merit in Baker's score of 71. La Franz "turned them well and kept a decent length" to capture 4 for 65. Gilbert ended up with the figures of 2 for 69. In Colts' second innings the score was 2 down for 181 at the end of play. Despite a lack of enthusiasm by East's bowlers, Rogers (86) and Maddern (48) gave pleasing displays. Beetson took the 2 wickets to fall for 24.

This match was played over the first two Saturday afternoons in October. At the end of the first week, Kearney, of The Courier-Mail (Brisbane) was, as always, quick to judge:

When Gilbert was given permission to play in Brisbane A grade Cricket; after certain officials had hinted that some of the club batsmen were "windy" at the thought of facing the aboriginal fast bowler, it was predicted that he would play ducks and drakes with opponents. However, Gilbert on Saturday hardly made an impression.

Admittedly he did not have the best of luck, as several chances were missed off him, but, on the whole, the batsmen always appeared to face him confidently. The success of Gilbert in inter-State cricket has deluded some innocent people into the belief that the lesser lights of club cricket would funk a duel with him.\(^141\)

On the 8th of October, and in another change of mind, the Q.C.A. executive rescinded a previous decision debarring Gilbert from playing for Country in the Country Week carnival. He, therefore, became available to play in matches against the Colt's team on October the 20th and the Metropolitan team on October the 23rd.\(^143\)

In the first of the Country Week matches a Colts team inflicted a crushing defeat on the Country team. Colts batted first and scored 9 declared for 387 on an easy-paced wicket that gave the bowlers little assistance. Gunthorpe produced a first-class display to score 130, retired, and

\(^{141}\) ibid., 12 October 1936: 9.

\(^{142}\) ibid., 10.

\(^{143}\) ibid., 5 October 1936: 9.
Brown played a very stylish innings for 76. Brown "played Gilbert very confidently, and brought off a variety of shots at the expense of the State’s fast bowler."\(^{144}\) Eight country bowlers were used and Faulkner bowled a good length to achieve the best bowling figures of 2 for 51. Gilbert took 2 wickets for 71 which was "enlivened at various periods by bumpers."\(^{145}\) Gilbert had five bowling sessions. "He gained his wickets in the first and fifth overs. He opened at a great pace, but gradually tiring, finished bowling fast-medium pace."\(^{146}\)

Country had a minor collapse when it commenced its ‘heart-breaking’ pursuit of the Colt’s total. At one stage they were 3 down for 12 but rallied somewhat to score 164. Stibe put up a "remarkable display of dour batting"\(^{147}\) to score 48. The Colt’s fielding proved to be first-class. The best of the Colt’s bowlers was Gooma, who gained 4 wickets for 22, from 7.5 overs. Rushbrook also bowled creditably and secured 4 for 45. With the match won, Brown, the Colt’s captain, decided to give the Country players further batting practice. Country went on to make 5 for 173 before the game was concluded. The best batting effort of this innings came from Allen with 48. Brown used ten bowlers and the best figures were returned by La Franz with an average of 3 for 42. After this match The Courier-Mail reported: "Gilbert is in better condition, and after yesterday’s rest may trouble the Metropolitan openers."\(^{148}\)

Country met Brisbane (Metropolis) in the final and most important match of the Country Week trials. Metropolis won by 9 wickets. Country batted first and made a ‘meagre’ total of

\(^{144}\) ibid., 21 October 1936: 10.

\(^{145}\) ibid.

\(^{146}\) ibid.

\(^{147}\) ibid., 22 October 1936: 10.

\(^{148}\) ibid.
Allen proved to be the only Country batsman "who showed any quality" and scored 55. In the bowling department for Metropolis Dixon bowled with some hostility and took a 'harvest' of 4 wickets for 28. Metropolis responded to the Country effort by scoring 279. Baker proved to be his team's top-scorer with 71 runs. During his time at the crease he "battered Gilbert's bowling as it had not been battered for some time." Gilbert held a 'stinging' shot to send Guttormsen on his way. Cockburn proved to be the most successful bowler for Country and returned the figures of 6 wickets for 50. Next best was Cameron with 2 for 45. Gilbert secured 1 wicket for 60. The Courier-Mail (Brisbane) reported: "Gilbert's first over prepared the spectators for a successful day with the ball, but his bowling was very ordinary, and carried little hostility to the batsmen."

In Country's second innings the team compiled 8 declared for 299. Allen carried off the batting honours for Country and made the bowling look ordinary in scoring 75. Gilbert did not take part in the second innings due to injury. Dixon proved to be the most successful bowler with 4 wickets for 52. The Metropolis second innings was 1 for 98. Andrews displayed 'colourful batting' to score 55, not out. Jones took the only wicket to fall at a cost of 9 runs.

---

\[149\] ibid., 24 October 1936: 11.

\[150\] ibid.

\[151\] ibid.
The Courier-Mail (Brisbane) was to report on Gilbert’s efforts:

Gilbert failed against the metropolis on Friday, his one wicket costing 60 runs. He did not put in an appearance at the cricket ground on Saturday morning.

During the afternoon an official from the Department for the Protector of Aborigines [sic] informed Mr. Stephens that Gilbert had complained of an injured shoulder, and that an examination had disclosed a painful strain.

The possibility of expert massaging righting the problem was mentioned, but the official statement last night suggests that Gilbert is definitely out of action for the coming Sheffield Shield match.\(^\text{152}\)

Gilbert received a medical opinion at a Hospital which suggested that he had a “strained Acromio-Clavicular joint.”\(^\text{153}\) The Sporting Globe reported his non-selection and said that this raised the question "as to whether his first class career has closed."\(^\text{154}\) High hopes had been placed in Gilbert and it would be unfortunate if he were to be ‘discarded’ in this manner. Gilbert’s place in the State team was taken by Amos after an absence of six years, in a move seen as ‘shortsighted.’\(^\text{155}\)

Some doubts were expressed about how severe Gilbert’s reported shoulder injury was and there was some indication that it was, partly at least, a ‘cover’ as he had been placed under close scrutiny and pressure and this had affected his attitude to playing and consequently his performances. No supporting evidence can be found for these claims other than the quick recovery he appeared to make. Because of the shoulder injury to Gilbert "light work was prescribed."\(^\text{156}\)

\(^{152}\) ibid., 30 October 1936: 12.

\(^{153}\) Eddie Gilbert, personal file information, op.cit., letter dated 28 October 1936.

\(^{154}\) The Sporting Globe, 28 October 1936: 8.

\(^{155}\) The Referee, 29 October 1936: 15.

\(^{156}\) Eddie Gilbert, personal file information, op.cit., 1936.
Gilbert missed the first club match after Country Week, but was back playing club Cricket for Colts in early November. There was a big interest in his re-appearance following "a period of inactivity owing to a shoulder injury."  

Colts batted first and scored 246 in their first innings of the match against Western Suburbs. Cockburn put on a dashing display to score 69 runs in quick time and Tallon hit up a valuable and restrained 50. Cook, with 6 wickets for 74, was the most successful bowler for Wests. At the end of the day Wests were 3 for 63. Gilbert was seen as a 'failure' in the match and, according to The Courier-Mail (Brisbane) report, seemed "to put little heart into his work and his trundling was never really hostile."  

His captain, Brown, was full of sympathy when he wrote:

Gilbert did not bowl with his old pace, but it is hard to put full pressure on an injured member so soon after resuming play. Apparently Eddie experienced no discomfort with his shoulder while bowling, and perhaps next week after two afternoon's practice he may spring a surprise.

---

157 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 9 November 1936: 9.
158 ibid.
159 ibid., 9 November 1936: 9.
The surprise would come in another way when on the 11th November 1936, Mr. R.T. Stephens, secretary of the Queensland Cricket Association, wrote to the Chief Protector of Aboriginals.

Dear Sir,

At the meeting of my Executive Committee held last evening, the matter of Eddie Gilbert was fully discussed, and as it was considered unlikely that he would be chosen for any Representative team this season, it was decided with your concurrence, to arrange for Gilbert to return to the Settlement early next week.

With regard to the cricketing clothes bought for Gilbert, it is asked that arrangements be made for these to be laundered at the Association's expense, and delivery of the laundered clothes be made to this Office.

Trusting these arrangements will meet with your approval, and thanking you for your co-operation.

Yours faithfully,

R.T. Stephens (Signature)
Secretary.

Written on the side and bottom of the copy filed by the Department were two annotations.

Clothing collected by Fresh Steam Laundry
16/11/36
J.T.R.

Accounts.

When claiming balance of Gilbert's wage from Q.C.A. collect also rail fare to Murgon from Brisbane.

(Initials illegible)
16/11/36

The last comment regarding money was followed up by a letter from the Chief Protector to the Queensland Cricket Association advising that the amount of £11.1.0 was due to the department.

The Chief Protector also requested the cancellation of the agreement and the return of this to the

---

160 Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit., letter dated 11 November, 1936
161 ibid.
The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), of the 13th of November 1936, reported that Eddie Gilbert was to play no more first-class cricket. It pointed out some of the above and then went on:

An official of the Department, in the absence of the Chief Protector, said yesterday that the wishes of the Q.C.A. would be carried out. Gilbert, therefore, will make his last Brisbane appearance with the Colts against Western Suburbs to-morrow. He will finish as a member of the ground staff at the Cricket Ground to-morrow.

A State selector who saw Gilbert bowl for the last time at the nets yesterday afternoon, said: "It's a pity we have to send him back, but his form is hopelessly bad. No good purpose would be served by keeping him here any longer."

Gilbert on one occasion dismissed Bradman for none, and captured 73 wickets at a cost of 29.75 since first appearing in Sheffield Shield cricket in 1930-31. The selectors were obviously prepared to use Gilbert's loss of form as a reason to exclude him from any considerations for the whole year and more than likely believed that his career should be ended, particularly in view of the shoulder problems he occasionally experienced. It was hardly a reasonable action to undertake when compared with Gilbert's previously demonstrated ability to recover from injury and perform well. For example, after a severe shoulder injury towards the end of 1932 Gilbert returned for a Shield match against South Australia in late January and bowled well.

The role of the Q.C.A. and the state selectors was, at times, very difficult to follow. There were occasions when they were very helpful and supportive of Gilbert but there were other times when decisions were made and actions undertaken which were very confusing. It is clear that, although some financial and other assistance was given to Gilbert, they also forced their will on him and manipulated him for their own, mainly financial purposes. There may well have been

---

162 ibid., letter dated 17 December 1936.
163 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 13 November 1936: 12.
other reasons associated with his personal behaviour that could have had a bearing on the final decision. These can only be speculated on but city life, along with the possibility of loneliness and isolation, may have also offered temptations and exciting experiences for Gilbert. In these circumstances some of his behaviour may have been unacceptable to the Queensland cricket hierarchy.

How or exactly when Eddie Gilbert was informed of the decision to end his career and whether any other factors may have been relevant cannot be ascertained. In light of the circumstances it would be fair to suggest that the full realisation of the Q.C.A.'s actions may well have caused a delayed-shock reaction with an amount of associated 'grief.' This would have been compounded by an initial disbelief and non-acceptance of the decision.

Irregardless of his state of mind, or any disillusionment, Gilbert's last appearance in 'big' cricket in Brisbane was in the resumed match against Western Suburbs. Colts had scored 246 in their first innings. Wests resumed batting after being 3 for 63 from the previous week and were all out for 165 runs, 81 runs behind Colts. Top-scorer for Wests was Bryce with 43. Slow bowler La Franz bowled and was chiefly responsible for Wests' demise, finishing with the creditable figures of 4 for 35.

Brown, writing for The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), was to say:

Apart from La Franz and Cockburn, Eddie Gilbert was our biggest threat. He bowled with more speed and vim than I have seen from him in any match this season. One or two balls were sent down with such speed that Don Tallon could not hold them, and they burst through his gloves for byes. Although he always looked dangerous, Eddie could not manage to secure a wicket until he bowled Thurlow, last man in for Wests.\(^{164}\)

His wicket in his 'farewell' game was at a cost of 39 runs.

\(^{164}\) ibid., 16 November 1936: 12.
Colts performed poorly in their second innings and at the end of play were 5 down for 55, Brown top-scoring with 21. Even so, Colts were to earn the points from the match with a win on the first innings. Rushbrook bowled really well to secure 2 wickets for 26. Gilbert did not bat in the second innings. "It was a rather disgusted Eddie who shook hands with his team mates at the conclusion of his last grade match before returning home."\footnote{165}

Gilbert had a highly controversial first-class career during which there was much questioning of his bowling action. Motion pictures were taken of his bowling, and although they seemed to support the claim that his bowling was fair, the matter was never fully resolved. In addition to the questions about his bowling action, Gilbert was subjected to scrutiny and comment that few white cricketers were exposed to or would tolerate. Some comments and controversies were particularly critical and would have reminded him of his 'place' as an Aborigine in a white-dominated society. In summary, these controversies included: allegations about his bowling action; footwear problems; his run-up; his temperament - not suited to first class-cricket; racial discrimination within the Shield team; intimidatory bowling; the South African reluctance to play against Gilbert; the Rockhampton incident with its racial overtones; a ban from playing cricket due to a leprosy scare at Cherbourg; his personal financial problems; relationship problems at Cherbourg; selection and tour team aspects; a ban from the local competition due to dangerous bowling; relationship with the Q.C.A. and state selectors; and, Bradman and some of his comments about Gilbert.\footnote{166} With his first-class career ended most of these were no longer relevant though the effects of some events would have long-lasting consequences.

\footnote{165} ibid. Gilbert would have had a 'defeatist' mentality and obviously would have felt disappointed with himself.

\footnote{166} These events will be reviewed later in the thesis.
CHAPTER IX
BACK HOME

The cumulative effects of the controversies that affected Gilbert’s first-class career and his other experiences and treatment, combined with the sudden way that his career was ended, would have had a profound and perhaps dehumanising effect on him. His physical injuries undoubtedly heightened his anxiety and could well have contributed to a feeling of helplessness and inadequacy.

Cricket, perhaps more than most other team sports, is a highly emotional ordeal and each player has his performance openly judged. A player must often face up to fears and doubts about failure. The fact that Gilbert was an Aborigine, with its additional racial factors and pressures, would have contributed to the stress he was suffering. Only Gilbert himself could have explained some of the psychological damage and emotional scars which resulted from his experiences. It is possible that he may have been disillusioned enough to wonder whether his cricket career had been worth it and whether he might have been happier confining himself to the settlement.

Not long after returning to Cherbourg he was selected to play in the Queensland Country team against the visiting England team at Ipswich on December 12th and 14th 1936. Gilbert indicated a willingness to play and just prior to the match it was reported: "Cricket fans are interested that Eddie Gilbert is to have a chance to try his bowling against the Englishmen."\(^1\)

The point was made that unless Gilbert could bowl in his old devastating style, "England should find the engagement an easy one."\(^2\) Gilbert’s appearance was to be one of the most interesting features of the game and it was seen as "his last opportunity this year to re-establish himself with

---

\(^1\) *The South Burnett Times*, 27 November 1936.

\(^2\) *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 11 December 1936: 4.
Gilbert withdrew from the team the day before the match, apparently "complaining of a sore shoulder."\(^4\) Indications are that he was not particularly inclined to play.\(^5\) The crowd at the match, who had looked forward to seeing Gilbert play, were disappointed when it became known just before the game commenced that he would not be playing. It is very likely the news that Gilbert was not to take the field was deliberately withheld until the last possible moment to ensure that interest in the match and attendance figures would not be affected.

Back at Cherbourg, one of the nurses, later to be Matron Rynne, was to remember Eddie after his first-class cricket career. In her account she outlines some of the behaviour and personal disappointment:

For a time he worked at the hospital and one day while giving out mixtures he had a towel draped over his arm and would approach the patient and ask, "What can I get for you madam" and I said, "What's that nonsense?" His reply, "That's how the drink waiters do things in the city hotels", where he informed me the white women went. He was chosen at one period to play cricket but developed an imaginary ache in his arm and said it was too painful for him to play. I said, "Your arm is not sore" he said, "It's all right to be a hero on the field, but a black man can be lonely when he is not accepted after the game."\(^6\)

Because of some of his behaviour as a hospital orderly, it might be suggested that the distorted and largely unexplained view of the white world that Gilbert experienced was overwhelming for him and resulted in some "pathetic mimicking of the values and behaviour of white society."\(^7\)

\(^3\) ibid.

\(^4\) The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 12 December 1936: 5. The telegram sent from the Superintendent at Cherbourg stated: "GILBERT NOT AVAILABLE COMPLAINS OF SHOULDER."

\(^5\) ibid., 4.


Figure 9.1. Map of Cherbourg settlement - 1930s.
Eddie Gilbert obviously felt disappointed and isolated when he was discarded by the Q.C.A. and for a time he did not appear to want to play cricket again. He had been recognised and respected for his achievements and for his involvement in that most respectable of all games, cricket. The adulation of crowds was suddenly gone and he was faced with the reality of making a living in the segregated and isolated existence of Cherbourg. Eddie Gilbert had lost a certain personal identity, although he was still well-known. He would have found it difficult to re-adjust to the life role assigned to him in society as an Aborigine, especially after his experiences of life in the white world. To have seen this life and not be affected by it and to feel incapable of being an accepted part of it, surely must have had some effect on him. Because of his character Eddie may well have kept much to himself and not shared many of his thoughts.

Gilbert lived quite close to the cricket grounds, and Olga Chambers, a settlement inmate, recalled that players in the cricket team "used to sing out for him to come down and play with them." For a time he resisted their demands but finally relented and by the early part of January he was back playing for the team. The local paper, The South Burnett Times, reported:

The local Cherbourg team went within an ace of laying low the giants of the willow from the Maroochy district in a one-day cricket fixture at the abo settlement last Monday. Eddie Gilbert, the former Queensland express trundler was in great heart, and took six wickets at a cost of only 21 runs. At the beginning of April the Cherbourg team completed the 1936-37 local season undefeated after a win over the Manumbar team. The highlight of the season had been a century scored in twenty-nine minutes by Frank ('Bigshot') Fisher. In a way which almost devalues the outstanding performances of the Aboriginal cricketers The South Burnett Times outlined the

---


9 The South Burnett Times, 8 January 1937.

10 Ibid., 9 April 1937.
paternalistic role of Robert Crawford:

Much of the credit for the success of the Aboriginals in recent years must go to
the head-teacher of the Cherbourg State School, Mr. R.T. Crawford, who might be termed the unofficial non-playing captain of the team. Mr. Crawford has charge of all the organization for the team and travels with the players to all matches, carrying out the duties of secretary, manager, selector, and performing many of the captain’s duties.11

During 1937 there were reports that Eddie was discontented and had a serious drinking
problem.12 This problem had surfaced a couple of years before but was now becoming more pronounced. The reasons why Eddie Gilbert had now taken to regular heavy drinking can be speculated on. The realisation that his cricket career had ended and he had little to show for his involvement helped to add to his feelings of inadequacy. He was basically shy, lonely, perhaps overly sensitive as a result of his experiences, and he was obviously depressed. In short he was a prime candidate to resort to drinking. Blake has asserted that the "rapid demise in his personal life, once his career had finished, highlighted that ‘success’ in the outside world was no guarantee of being able to withstand the pressure and trauma of settlement life."13

Despite the desire of settlement officials to control and dominate just about all aspects of
the inmates’ lives, constant surveillance was not possible and some alcohol invariably found its way onto the settlement and into the hands of those who sought it. Cherbourg resident, Les Stewart, remembered: "Alcohol was banned for Aboriginal people but he [Gilbert] seemed to be able to get it very easily. He drank heavily. I used to see him myself."14

11 ibid.

12 Eddie Gilbert, personal file 8E/137. Department of Community Services, Brisbane, 1988: information 1936.

13 Blake, op. cit., 287.

Alcohol was obviously something that Gilbert had some association with as a member of the Queensland cricket team. After the initial exhilaration of freedom and the excitement of a previously forbidden pleasure, alcohol was to assume a role in regard to his response to his treatment by some other players and white lifestyle. Tod Schacht has suggested that Gilbert drank 'privately' at least as early as 1931. By his own reported admission, Eddie Gilbert had used alcohol as a way of 'escaping' the treatment he had received at the hands of some white players in a few of the State teams. Although it is most likely that Eddie Gilbert initially drank to compensate for a sense of weakness or inferiority, what may well have been a psychological dependence, appears to have developed into a greater physical dependence where he drifted in and out of a drinking problem.

As alcohol would have been expensive to obtain, it is more than likely that Gilbert, suffering as he was from high levels of anxiety and tension, drank heavily when alcohol was available. His personal departmental file chronicles how this cycle of behaviour eventually caused him to lead a life of increasing futility. It was always expected that Aborigines could not 'hold' their alcohol and Eddie Gilbert, by his actions, was to reinforce this common stereotype.

Because of this behaviour, Eddie became alienated from those white people at the settlement who had previously looked after him. He may well have used his fame to acquire alcohol from whites in the past. It is clear that reports of his behaviour were 'covered-up' by settlement officials during his career. This cover-up ensured that those responsible for his welfare, particularly the settlement officials, could in no way be blamed for his condition. The tragedy of the situation was that after his first-class career he had now become a 'nuisance,' and, partly due to his experiences with the outside world, he became more 'difficult' to handle.

---

15 Tod Schacht recollections in The Gympie Times, 17 November 1987: 18. As outlined elsewhere in the study, Gilbert had been in trouble for drinking on the settlement before 1937.
Figure 9.2. Cherbourg Football team 1930s.
Over time Gilbert became even more restless, unsettled, and increasingly unstable. Alcohol became a convenient escape mechanism from the harsh realities of life. He appeared to have ‘fallen in’ with a group of Aborigines who were developing a culture around alcohol, a substance that had no tribal significance at all for them. As alcohol use often also involves violence, Eddie may have already fallen into this situation regularly. Of drinking at the settlement it would later be written: "For Cherbourg men, in particular, alcohol was a relief from boredom, a symbol of friendship and status, and a symbol of defiance of whites and women." In analysing the reasons for excessive alcohol use it has been suggested that

...Aboriginal residents at Cherbourg were totally managed by white administrators. This management, and the psychological and material dependency it fostered, led to widespread feelings of powerlessness, frustration and depression among Aboriginal residents. These feelings facilitated severe alcohol abuse and alcoholism on the reserve.

By the late 1930s evidence of some inmate disenchantment on the settlement was highlighted by various incidents of insubordination and absconding as well as occasional reluctance to perform certain allocated tasks. The May 1938 edition of Abo Call carried ‘A letter from Cherbourg,’ which gives a courageous insight into the life of an ‘institutionalised’ Aborigine. It was written by Roy Charleville, and said, in part:

It is time for somebody to wake the people up, and let them know how we are living.

We are not living in our wild state now. There are a big majority has education, and speaks as well as a white man, yet we can’t go out looking for jobs. We have to get a red paper called a permit to walk our own soil. We are treated as if Aborigines are a bad people, which we are not. We are good natured people. Why don’t they let us live just like white people live?


We want to handle our own money, so that we know what we are spending. We do not like to have our earnings seized by the Superintendent, and handed out in ordered [order].

White people don’t give us a decent chance. They keep us down. Cherbourg is like a jail.

We are worse off now than 150 years ago. We are still kept in darkness, waiting to see the light, but the white man will not let us step forward, so we must fight for our justice and freedom.

Believe me, in your fight,

Roy Charleville. 18

In spite of his drinking problem, and continuing relationship problems with some other inmates, Gilbert remained very popular with most of the inmates at Cherbourg. Perhaps some of his drinking had something to do with impressing these people, to do a ‘white’ thing. He also sought diversion and excitement in his life in the attentions of various members of the opposite sex.

In the absence of concrete evidence it is difficult to state categorically what the situation was like for Gilbert at this time and to perform an accurate analysis of his life and the reasons for his behaviour. It may be that Eddie was not consciously aware of the causes of his behaviour because of the full weight of events and a low level of self-esteem and depression resulting from a lost capacity for independent action.

As Eddie Gilbert was changing as a person so was the social structure of the settlement. Due to the construction of cottages and other physical and social changes on the settlement during the twenties and thirties there was a break-up of the camp areas which had been distinguished by regional affiliation. By the latter part of the 1930s little tribal identity remained on the settlement. For the most part it had taken on a new identity which was to become the Wakka-Wakka or Barambah (Cherbourg) ‘mob’ identity, so named for the group of tribes that originally inhabited

18 Abo Call, May 1938: 2.
the area on which the settlement was established. According to Blake: "Inmates responded to their changed circumstances by not only maintaining some previous practices and rejecting others, but also by developing new cultural forms and expressions."^{20}

This identity was to have elements of both white and traditional Aboriginal cultures and had developed despite the fact that Aborigines were encouraged to believe that they must accept Western culture and lifestyles. Of the changes Blake has asserted that "instead of stripping the inmates of their identity and extinguishing their cultural distinctiveness, the reserve system only served to reinforce their 'otherness.'"^{21} The development of a distinctive settlement culture proved to be a complex and multi-faceted process.

Eddie Gilbert was to state around this time that he was a member of the Wakka-Wakka tribe, although he clearly would have known he had an association with the northern or Cooktown mob. This statement by him could be interpreted as recognising the emergence of the Cherbourg identity or was an attempt to associate himself with this tribe. Gilbert was accepted by the local groups despite the persistence of some rivalry between the Wakka-Wakka and the Northern groups.

Cricket and football proved to be popular activities because all the inmates "could adapt those cultural forms for their own purposes"^{22} and "successes became an integral part of the settlement culture and traditions."^{23} Because of his cricket career, Gilbert was to be a part of,
and may have been a significant contributor to, the destruction of many of the traditional and diverse Aboriginal tribal identities and cultures of the people at Cherbourg.

With these changes gradually occurring at Cherbourg and other similar "centres of relatively enlightened social policy," elsewhere in parts of northern Australia murders of Aboriginal people still occurred.

The comments and discussion serve to indicate that, by 1937, Gilbert was a restless and 'disturbed' person in the midst of not only a changing settlement social order but subtle changes in Government thinking towards Aborigines which would also affect him. From the mid-1930s onwards there was a period of some awareness of Aboriginal issues when it was realised that the existing protection policies of isolating Aborigines on reserves had failed to stop certain abuses. Along with this was the acceptance that Aboriginal people were not 'dying out' and meant that genuine attempts would have to be made to assimilate them into society. In September 1939, and in a 'concrete' move, the amended 1897 Act was repealed and replaced by two separate Acts, one for the Aborigines and one for the Torres Strait Islanders. Despite various changes in the legislation, "An Aboriginal on a reserve was still as completely subjugated to the will of the superintendent as he had been under the earlier Act."^25

In the midst of change Gilbert's first-class career had ended; he had been separated from his wife for some time; he had little regard for his health and well-being; he had reasonably little family support, which was an important aspect of Aboriginality; he was in debt as a result of his first-class cricket career and had no real job prospects other than those he had always had; he was drinking; and, he was alienated from those who previously had largely controlled his life,


including some (one could well argue) who benefited from his career. Even though he was still drinking heavily, Gilbert was usually working regularly. Perhaps his drinking at this time was identified by a ‘weekend’ or ‘binge drinking’ phenomenon designed to partly alleviate the stresses of the previous week. He was, however, involved in the settlement instrumental band, and boxing.

Broome has summarised the despondency and despair which many Aborigines like Gilbert found themselves a part:

> Given the vicious circle of poverty and the many dilemmas Aborigines had to face for most of the twentieth century, it is remarkable that so many survived so well in true Australian battler style. It is little wonder that a number of them fell into hopelessness, perhaps more in this period than ever before. Any human group placed in the same set of circumstances, under the same set of pressures of poverty and prejudice, would have reacted in the same way of despair and defiance.²⁶

According to ‘Paddy’ Wharton, who worked for the State Railway Department, it was around this time that Eddie Gilbert spent some time away from the settlement. His account gives another interesting insight into Eddie Gilbert. It is in contrast to his personal problems and behaviour that were evident on the settlement.

That’s ‘ridgey didge’ [true] about him playing cricket at Warra. I played cricket at Warra with him – he was a member of our Warra cricket team and he worked in a Railway Flying Gang of 20-30 men. He was the only aboriginal in the gang. He stayed in the Railway camp at a place catied Ehlma...He was there for about six months. He played half a dozen cricket matches through the cricket season...We were playing cricket in our season and we just went down and..."Come and play cricket Eddie." We talked him into it and he played for us. He was very shy when he was first there, you know. You couldn’t get anything out of him for a start but after he had a couple of games with us he was good – he talked. He always had a shy nature and I think only because he was dark you see. We were white and he was the only dark bloke we had with us. He was well-liked with us. He came into our home. He was a gentleman as far as we were concerned – fun – he’d laugh and joke. We treated him the same as we treated any other person. A crowd would come to see him play cricket. He

was slightly built with long arms that went halfway down -- to his knees.

...we were on a concrete wicket with the matting, you see. He didn’t bowl at his full pace. He said every fourth ball [was to be a fast one] and I said "Right'o." He was fast by cripes, he was fast. I used to field at first slip and ‘Dobby’ Best was next to me at second slip and I told ‘Dobby’ -- Eddie Gilbert’s got the finger up for the fourth ball. I said to ‘Dobby,’ “Now be careful, get your hands up, this one’s going to be fast -- if they happen to snick it." ‘Dobby’ said, "I'll take it." I had my hands up and ‘Dobby’ had his hands down here. The bloke snicked the ball straight to ‘Dobby.’ ‘Dobby’ caught it all right but he caught it off his chest.

He never drank up there with us but he liked a smoke. Another time...we were playing this Dalby Rep. team and I was fielding right out on the left boundary and anyway this bloke hit the ball and, of course, I caught it and Eddie comes racing over to me, "Best catch I ever see, Paddy, give us a smoke." [Laughter]. Every time I got a wicket off him he said, "Give us a smoke." Sid Kirk was our wicket-keeper and he said, "You get first slip and long stop." Sid stood right over the wicket and this captain from Dalby, he used to come right out and he [Kirk] said, "I'll stump him." Sid Kirk stood over the stumps and stumped him and down comes Eddie. "Oh, good catch Sid, give us a smoke." Sid didn’t smoke but I had to supply the smoke.

Eddie while he was with us would tell us little instances that happened. He enjoyed the State team and he said, "They were good mates." [imitating the way Gilbert had said it]. He was always shy and backward to mix with them -- they made him. 27

Clem Lack, of The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), visited the settlement during April 1937, and wrote a fairly romantic and complimentary report on various aspects. His two-part report covered a description of the settlement and the personalities. He also included the mandatory description of a corroboree and spear and boomerang throwing and in so doing added little to the common picture of the settlement and perceptions gained about it. Lack gave an incorrect impression that traditional cultural practices were a prominent feature of life on the settlement. In his discussion of sport he was to say:

Mr. Crawford is also the sporting coach, and he has reason to be enthusiastic about the prowess of the cricket team and football teams of the settlement. For the last four years the cricket team has been undefeated, and holds the premiership of the Murgon Cricket Association. The remarkably keen eyesight of the natives makes them adept at timing. The children use a piece of broomstick for a bat, and can hit the ball with it every time.

"Eddie Gilbert," said Mr. Crawford proudly, "is only one pebble among many on this particular beach."

The team spirit is developed in them to a high degree, and they are very proud of the prestige of the settlement in sport.

The Chief Protector, in making mention of the success of the Cherbourg cricket and football teams in his Annual Report for 1937, was to repeat similar comments to those made previously.

Settlement teams played football and cricket against white teams at various centres and had a most successful year. The Cherbourg teams, especially, deserve special mention for their achievements. The general good conduct of these boys when away from home has given rise to favourable comment.

During 1937, 'Edie,' Eddie's estranged wife, gained permission to move out of Cherbourg and stay with a Mr. and Mrs. G.H. Geissler. She was more than likely employed to do some sort of domestic work. Archival records indicate that during 1938 'Edie' applied for a six month exemption from the Aboriginal Protection Act. Her place of residence at this time was given as Mundangbanna. She was to be successful in gaining an exemption because she was able to convince the settlement Superintendent (Semple) that she had met certain standards and was capable of providing for herself outside the settlement. Even when Aboriginal people were

---

28 The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 3 April 1937: 19.
30 Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op. cit., letter no. 9687, 1937.
32 Exemptions were an incentive for workers to give good service. Successful applicants were free from the provisions of the Act. Between 1916 and 1939 only eleven were granted to
granted an exemption, "it did not mean that they had the same rights as non-Aboriginals."33

Meanwhile, the 1938-39 cricket season opened in October with a game between Cherbourg and Murgon. Gilbert, at this stage, still playing for Cherbourg, showed that he was still a force to be reckoned with, and "Although not as fast as previously, he secured four wickets for 41, off 11 overs."34 He also opened the batting and made a fast 92. Cherbourg won by 7 runs on the first innings.

In November 1938, in a fixture between Cherbourg and Goomeri, Gilbert gave "a fine all-round performance."35 The Cherbourg team compiled a total of 98, of which Gilbert scored 52, not out. In reply Goomeri scored 79 runs. Gilbert took 5 wickets for 15, from 11 overs. Bowling with a great deal of pace and accuracy, into a cross-wind, "he swung disconcertingly and proved too much for Goomeri's batsmen."36 All of his victims were clean-bowled. Cherbourg won the match by 19 runs on the first innings with 6 wickets in hand.

Eddie Gilbert appeared in a photograph of the Cherbourg Cricket team for 1938.37 The last game in which information can be found of Gilbert playing cricket was when a team from Murgon and District met a team from the Proston and District Cricket Association in December 1938.

Barambah inmates. The Chief Protector relied mainly on the opinion of the settlement Superintendent.


34 The South Burnett Times, 7 October 1938.

35 ibid., 25 November 1938.

36 ibid.

37 John Oxley Library, Brisbane - Cricket photographs, 'Clubs and Societies,' Cherbourg Cricket Club, 1938.
Murgon won the toss and batted, but Malone was soon out for a duck. He was replaced by the well-known Eddie Gilbert, but Eddie, in trying to keep a "bumper" from hitting him in the face, skied the ball to give Rolley an easy catch.

...Carson was next and was going nicely until he played one from Gilbert with his chest and had to retire for some time.\(^\text{38}\)

Although it is possible that Gilbert may have held some hope of a resurrected career for the first year or two, this dream gradually faded. As time passed, his lifestyle and personal problems undoubtedly affected his interest and motivation. There is some indication that ‘sometimes’ he ‘helped out’ at cricket on the settlement and played the occasional social match. On the whole his regular cricketing days were over. He had become, in some respects, like so many other former sporting heroes, compelled into an pointless existence of re-living their dreams and relying on their memorable sporting achievements to retain the respect and admiration of other people.

Despite his limited involvement the settlement cricket team performed well in the 1938-39 season and was undefeated in winning yet another premiership in the season. The settlement team had won their first premiership in the 1931-32 season and then again in five consecutive seasons from 1933-34 to 1938-39.\(^\text{39}\) Over the years the teams contained many fine players, including Collie Sheridan, Claude Willieboy, Jack Daylight, Stanley Alberts, Frank Fisher and Jack Malone, to name a few. Gilbert had a central role in the early successes. However, it is a reflection of the depth and ability of the team because they later performed well in a fairly strong competition without the regular participation of Gilbert. For the settlement the achievements in cricket, along with the successes in football, were to instil great pride.

---

\(^{38}\) The South Burnett Times, 9 December 1938.

\(^{39}\) ibid., 12 February 1932.
Figure 9.3. Eddie Gilbert - a photographic portrait.
Jack (‘Champ’) Malone remembers playing in the local Association games near the ‘sunset’ time of Gilbert’s cricketing career:

Eddie Gilbert—he was a fellow who kept to himself and he wasn’t a cheeky sort of a fellow. I just started to play then really. He didn’t run far, about 7 steps and he used to be pretty fast. The old wicket-keeper, a ‘fella’ called Willy Bone, well they played for years together, and all his fingers was all—like they were broken—that’s how fast Eddie was. I didn’t mix much with him.

An interesting comparison between Jack Malone and Eddie Gilbert was contained in a letter written by Superintendent Semple to the Chief Protector in March 1939. Although short, it was insightful and reflected on Eddie Gilbert’s character, background and environment. It said:

Jack is an opening bat whose average is over 50. He is an excellent field in any position and a good change bowler. He is a different lad from Gilbert. He does not slouch along but is very quick and active and a half-caste. I do not think if he gets into the Queensland team that the team would take exception to him and he is likeable.

Semple.
(Signature)

Although missing from the first-class cricket scene for a time, Gilbert was not forgotten by the white public. When discussing the new Aboriginal Preservation and Protection Act in 1939, Mr. F. Nicklin, member for Murrumbar (and later State Premier), was to discuss how Aborigines had taken to various sports and how both the Cherbourg cricket and football teams were well-known on the North Coast and in other places they had played at. He even included mention of Eddie Gilbert in his speech:

---

40 Jack (‘Champ’) Malone, personal interview, April 1989.

I have had the privilege of playing against them - not when Eddie Gilbert was bowling - (laughter) - and I must confess that I have played against worse sportsmen who were very much whiter than they were. They have certainly shown their adaptability by taking enthusiastically to sport and becoming very good cricketers and footballers.42

While the local matches often resulted in a good outcome for the settlement team it was not enough for the team to escape some adverse publicity. During a cricket match in October 1939, one of the cricketers from the settlement stole a cricket watch from the car of a player from the opposition team. At the subsequent trial Mr. Semple, the settlement Superintendent, said the defendant "was a rather stupid but generally well behaved member of the Settlement."43 The unnamed guilty man was given fourteen day's jail.

With the outbreak of World War Two a local cricket association competition was still organised, though smaller than usual. Cherbourg did not join the local competition for the 1939-40 season. The result of this decision was that no players from the settlement were considered for the local representative team, as had been the case in earlier years.

The decision not to join the local competition did not mean that cricket was not played at all at Cherbourg. The settlement team played at least the occasional match with teams outside of Cherbourg. Few details are available but a newspaper report in The South Burnett Times outlined how, in early January 1940, "A thoroughly enjoyable day was spent by the Goomeri second team when they visited Cherbourg and played a picnic team."44 The Cherbourg team under the captaincy of Jack Daylight, but minus Gilbert, won on the first innings.

---

43 The South Burnett Times, 13 October 1939.
44 ibid., 12 January 1940.
As the War continued the local cricket competition went on, "but departures and enlistments in the A.I.F. and R.A.A.F." made it impossible for some of the teams to re-form. With the labour shortages caused by War, the demand for inmate labour away from the reserve increased. Wartime restrictions on settlement development resulted in many of the settlement inmates being sent away to work on plantations (usually sugar-cane or banana) or to other areas of work. Despite this loss of players, some social games were played by the settlement team against local teams during the War years. However, it would not be until after the war had ended that a strong and well-organised local competition was re-commenced.46

Figure 9.4. Settlement worker Gilbert.

45 ibid., 10 October 1940. Other factors may have played a role. For example, after the surrender of Singapore the Prime Minister (Curtin) stated: "I feel that the stature of our race is such that we can put playtime aside. The hours previously devoted to sport and leisure must now be given to the duties of war." The Telegraph (Brisbane), 16 February 1942: 5.

46 Patrick Tennison. 'Cherbourg.' Modern Times. August, 1947: 6. This article mentions sport after the War.

Week-end sporting teams are arranged by Mr. Rees, and these boys have provided plenty of good strong competition in all phases of sport carried on by teams in the district.
By the early 1940s Eddie was away from the settlement and either living with, or involved in some sort of relationship with Ruby Cleven, who originally came from St. George way. A son, Edward ('Eddie') Barney, was born at Cherbourg on the 7th August 1941.

Eddie jnr. recalled the family history as it had been related to him:

Maiden name was a Ruby Twaddle then she married a fellow named Bill Cleven from what they call Toomelah Mission, just outside Goondiwindi. Just before she came to Cherbourg I believe that Bill Cleven got killed by -- he was a bullock rider at the rodeo -- buckjumper -- speared in the stomach. She came with my grandmother then to settle in Cherbourg and that's where she met my father then, Eddie Gilbert, at Cherbourg Settlement. He used to play in the band I think.

Livingstone Chambers, who knew Gilbert well, believed that Eddie had met Ruby while she was living at Kingaroy and "they lived up at Kingaroy."

Ruby Cleven according to some reports died giving birth to her baby although other accounts suggest she died some time later of tuberculosis. Eddie Gilbert left after the birth of his son. The young Eddie, who for a time later in life was given the nickname of 'Bowler,' takes up the story:

I was born in Cherbourg and then I was put in the dormitory. My grandparents came at the time and they took me out. I went up to Kingaroy. I did my Primary and Secondary education at Kingaroy up to 1959 when I left.

47 Eddie Barney, personal interview, April 1988.

48 ibid. Eddie Barney later represented Australia in the Empire Games at Perth in 1962 as a boxer and was the first Aborigine to represent his country in international competition. Departmental records indicate that the birth of Edward Claude Cleven was not properly registered. Records show he was born at Cherbourg on the 19th August 1941, father Willie Cleven and mother Ruby Cleven. No mention is made of the death of either Ruby or Willie. The whereabouts of Willie Cleven was unknown in 1946.

49 ibid.

50 Livingstone Chambers, personal interview, op.cit.

51 Les Stewart, personal interview, op.cit.

52 Eddie Barney, personal interview, op.cit.
Ruby Cleven's mother, Tottie Twaddle, was the tribal wife of Willie Joe Barney. Although they had raised the boy from infancy a request made in 1947 to adopt the boy because of "rumours that Eddie Gilbert intends to claim the child and to take him from them." The request was 'exhaustively' investigated by the relevant government departments but the application was not approved because "neither applicant is competent to give the prescribed affidavit as required by the State Children’s Act." Despite this being the case no objection was raised to the child being raised by his grandparents.

Eddie Gilbert played a game of cricket in Brisbane for Toombul in early 1943. Syd Redgrave jnr., recalled:

In 1942 to 1944 it was in that period that the Q.C.A. put a Warehouse team into A grade competition and called it Warehouse in lieu of a Colts team. Well, in the middle of this time -- I think it would be 1943 -- Eddie Gilbert came back out of retirement. He played for Toombul at Nundah against my Warehouse team and Bill Rowe was the captain of Warehouse. He played in the first Sheffield Shield match.

The Telegraph (Brisbane) reported how "Gilbert was making his first appearance in Brisbane cricket for a number of years. He turned up the first Saturday and he had no shirt, no pants, no nothing. Toombul got it from somewhere...to come to play."  

---

53 Barney spoke to Gilbert who "discounted this suggestion but Barney is not re-assured."

54 One obstacle was that legal adoption was seen as requiring the consent of the 'father,' Willie Cleven.

55 At one stage during the 1941-42 season Toombul, who were to be Premiers, were forced to call on "a number of B Grade boy cricketers," including future International player Ken MacKay. This was necessary due to numbers of players enlisting in the Armed Services. The Telegraph (Brisbane) 7 February 1942: 6.


57 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 6 February 1943: 8. The newspaper also printed a photograph of Gilbert bowling.
Warehouse won the toss and batted, P. Smith opened to the bowling of E. Gilbert, who measured six paces and in place of his usual apparently leisurely walk he ran the few steps. The old pace was lacking to a certain extent and some of his deliveries were pitched very short. Two runs came off his first over. The length in his second over was much better and the ball came fast off the wicket, which was a shade soft.

Gilbert bowled 5 overs for 10 runs without securing a wicket.

In the first over of Gilbert's second turn at bowling his deliveries fell very short, and three runs came from the over.

In Gilbert’s next over a fast one went off Rowe’s leg and took his wicket. The next ball was his fastest so far and beat Redgrave but was too high.58

Syd Redgrave jnr. was to outline the play:

Eddie came on to bowl -- and he clean-bowled Bill Rowe first ball. Bill Rowe was a left-hander...and I went in and Eddie bowled to me outside off stump and it went ‘whoosh’ past me. He was quicker than anything I’d faced for a while. We had in those days one or two who would...bowled wide to get used to the pitch off the wicket...and I went like that...to cut it and missed it by half a mile, you know, and it was gone and everybody at Nundah went ‘Ooohh’ -- they were surprised that I tried to hit it. I didn’t try to hit it -- when it went I attempted the stroke. Eddie bowled low next ball and I pulled from outside the off stump and the grandstand was there and it landed -- stopped -- pretty wet I think, the ground -- and I got two for it and he come to the next ball and this time I got onto it and I hit him for a ‘four’ -- pull-shot along the ground. I got a 2 and two ‘fours.’ I think I got 13 or 14 off six balls and George Lockie, the captain of Toombul took him off because I got that many runs off the over. He never bowled him for the rest of the innings and Eddie never turned up for the second Saturday. I’ll tell you honestly and 5 or 6 years ago or whatever it was before he retired he might have been a little bit faster -- I don’t know but he hadn’t played for some years when he came back.59

Warehouse compiled a first innings total of 7 (declared) for 305. Brazil made 107, not out. Next Saturday Toombul in reply was only able to muster 51 runs to finish the match 254 runs in arrears. With the non-appearance of Gilbert in the second week his brief come-back to cricket

58 ibid.
59 Syd Redgrave jnr., personal interview, op.cit.
was ended.

Sometime, perhaps also in the early 1940s, Gilbert was in Gympie and at the scene of some of his former glories. His appearance is recalled by Tod Schacht, who had known him from earlier years:

I met Gilbert once more when the glory of his cricket career had faded.

On this day, I was playing cricket at Albert Park.

Eddie for his own reasons was avoiding people and had remained out of view behind parked cars. He called out to me and was very pleased when I went over to him.

He proceeded to give me advice on how to be a fast bowler.

What Eddie had to say was pathetic - only some cunning ideas. Amazing as it may seem, he had apparently never been told how to grip a ball to cut or swing it.

I know this information was not readily available to the ordinary cricketer in this era, but I cannot understand why he was not given the best advice available in his day.60

Meanwhile, in 1942 'Edie' (Edith) Gilbert was sent to Fantome Island Hospital suffering from venereal disease. Fantome Island was part of the Palm Island group of islands in north Queensland and all people transferred to Palm Island settlement would spend some time there before moving to the settlement. In addition, Fantome Island "was used as a holding ground for sufferers of venereal disease."61

Suspected carriers were held there before being allowed to proceed to Palm Island. They lived mainly on damper. A boat would call there several times a month, drop the provisions and then beat a speedy retreat.62

60 The Gympie Times, 7 November 1987: 18.

61 Bill Rosser. This is Palm Island. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1978: 46.

62 ibid., 48
'Edie' was reported at this time as having had a child who was deceased. This record indicates that the child was called Barbara, while another Government record indicates a child called Bebrillie.\(^63\) It is most likely that both these reports refer to the same child, but whether this was Eddie Gilbert's child or not is unclear. Some reports had suggested that she was unable to have children, and it is a little unusual that she and Eddie had not had any children early in their married life. A couple of sources expressed the belief that the child may have been 'adopted,' though most people spoken to from these times had no recollection at all of 'Edie' having a baby.\(^64\)

After the release of 'Edie' in 1943 she wrote to the Native Affairs Sub-Department in an attempt to locate Eddie.\(^65\) There was a report that he was in Brisbane playing cricket, but this was not the case, and it was later noted that he was working at Goomeri corn-pulling, for at least a small part of the year.\(^66\) In March 1944 'Edie' applied to return to Cherbourg after her impending release from Palm Island. It was agreed to allow her to stay in the dormitory to overcome the risk of causing a disturbance because she did "not desire to resume marital relations with Eddie."\(^67\) She returned from Palm Island in April but left the train at Maryborough allegedly sick. At the time 'Edie' was described as a "short, plump, middle-aged half-caste, copper-coloured woman."\(^68\)

\(^63\) Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit.

\(^64\) Interview with various informants, confidential comments. The fact that 'Edie' could not have children may well have been a source of tension in the relationship with Eddie.

\(^65\) Eddie had been estranged with 'Edie' for several years.

\(^66\) Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit.

\(^67\) Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit.

\(^68\) ibid.
The next record of Eddie was in 1944, when he was refused a permanent exemption from the Act for "over several years not succeeding in maintaining himself." He was also reported to be an "inveterate gambler and he persistently returned to Cherbourg from outside employment."
Superintendent Semple, who for so long exerted a benevolent and paternalistic influence over Gilbert, now did not report on him in very glowing terms:

This boy in the past has been giving me some considerable trouble, as he is inclined to be lazy when at employment - I had some difficulty in keeping him out at work. He would return to the Settlement during the week-ends and not returning to his employment until the Tuesday or sometimes Wednesday following, during the intervening time was continually gambling. neither [Neither] did he report at the office.

On the 17th July after an interview with him in this office he advised that I had not given him a fair deal. I gave him a memo to the effect, that he could absent himself from the Settlement for six months and could collect his own wages, providing he did not return to the Settlement during the week-ends, but should he return, report to me.

I found that this permission had no effect, as he still came into the Settlement practically every week-end without reporting himself and spent his time gambling. During one of the week-ends he was on the Settlement, a bush-fire broke out and he was asked by the native police to go with others to extinguish the fire, and this he refused to do. This was reported to me on the Monday morning, I then gave instructions that should Gilbert come to the Settlement during the week-end he was to be immediately be put in gaol. On the following Saturday he came to the Settlement with two others...I told Gilbert that he had broken his agreement with me by continually coming into the Settlement, and that the permission to look for work and to collect his own wages would be cancelled. I also told him that he had to go to work at Fairymead, where he would be placed under the same conditions as other natives working there.

I may mention that before I sent Gilbert to Fairymead and during the time the agreement was made that he should collect his own wages, Miss Rynne, who visited the village to inspect the cottages for cleanliness noticed Gilbert seated in the gambling ring with others who should have been at work, and Gilbert should have been at employment.

Gilbert was not content with the arrangement and while he was there he tried to gain the help of the local Member of Parliament (Mr. Barnes).71

Despite his past actions there was one report during this time which suggested that his behaviour had now become more acceptable. In the same year he had a "non-malignant growth on his lip

71 ibid.
burnt-off\textsuperscript{72} and had radium treatment. During 1945 he also received an offer to go to play cricket in Brisbane, "in a Cricket Club composed of coloured men"\textsuperscript{73} called the ‘Swifts’ who were competing in 1st grade Junior Fixtures. There was initial reluctance by settlement officials to let Gilbert go because press and radio reports in Brisbane had made announcements about Gilbert’s ‘plans’ before he had approached them on the matter. The Department later raised no objections if a job was found for him and accommodation could be arranged, but he became ill and was unable to go. His sickness turned out to be pleurisy and required medical care over a period of time.\textsuperscript{74}

On the 25th October 1945, ‘Edie’ and Eddie Gilbert gained Exemption Certificates from the settlement for a further six months after reports that their behaviour was ‘acceptable.’ By the end of the same month Eddie became reconciled with his wife, ‘Edie,’ who at the time was working for a Mrs. Neilsen at Red Hill in Brisbane. ‘Edie’ left this job in May 1946, and gained employment with the Tramway Department in Brisbane.\textsuperscript{75}

Against the background of Gilbert’s life in the 1940s was the fact that, although government policy was more enlightened than in earlier times, Queensland white society was generally still racist in a way which had changed little over many years. What had changed for the Aboriginal people on the settlements was the fact that they were allowed to gain exemptions and live independently off the settlements. How they survived in such situations was often not of any great concern to the relevant authorities, though some checks were made on a few people.

\textsuperscript{72} ibid.

\textsuperscript{73} ibid.

\textsuperscript{74} ibid. Further treatment included chest X-rays.

\textsuperscript{75} ibid. At this time ‘Edie’ had £5-6-1 in the bank and Eddie had £7-10-6 to his name in a bank account.
During the early part of 1946 Eddie Gilbert was working in Brisbane when the Department attempted to contact him. In an effort to locate Gilbert and check on his conduct, living conditions and livelihood the Superintendent at Cherbourg (Semple) contacted the police.

Figure 9.6. Cherbourg cricket team 1938.
On the 15th July a report was made:

I have to report that the abovenamed aboriginal is now camped with other aboriginals at Red Hill Kingaroy.

From inquiries I have ascertained that he came to Kingaroy district about the beginning of April and remained here until towards the end of May, 1946, when he went to Brisbane. During that time he worked intermittently at peanut harvesting for a total of about 14 days. After spending about one week in Brisbane he returned to this district and has since camped at Kingaroy and surrounding towns. Since he returned from Brisbane, a period of about 2 months, he has not done any work.

Inquiries show that Gilbert has been loafing about the aboriginal camps and living on other natives who are working.

When questioned as to why he had not done any work for the past 2 months he stated that he has not been able to get work, but he failed to produce any evidence that he had made any genuine effort to get a job. There has been plenty of work available in the district.

Information has been received to the effect that Gilbert has been doing a lot of gambling with other natives who are employed at the peanut silos. When questioned about this he admitted that there was quite a lot of gambling amongst them and stated that he considered that the coloured people were entitled to gamble,

As a result of my inquiries I am of the opinion that this native is not an industrious type, and his conduct and living conditions are of such a nature that he is not a fit and proper person to be granted exemption from the provisions of "The Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act of 1939". Apart from the fact that he has done only about 14 days work since the beginning of April and appears to spend most of his time gambling and loafing about the aboriginal camps, he has not come adversely under the notice of the Police for misconduct such as drinking etc., but I consider that he is the type that would become a nuisance if granted exemption from the Act.

...it would appear then that he is not capable of properly caring for himself without the assistance of the Director.

The Inspector of Police
Maryborough

For the report he was interviewed by Police Sergeant Cooke who "formed the opinion that he is a very cheeky type of native, stating that the Government had never done anything for him other than give him a bark hut to live in, following on all the work he had done painting and doing other work on buildings."\(^{77}\) The gambling referred to in the report was playing the card game 'Coon Can' "with the winner taking the centre."\(^{78}\)

A short time later Gilbert gained employment in Kingaroy as a casual farm labourer. Prior to this he was "employed by Main Roads Commission on Road work near Kingaroy for about 2 weeks."\(^{79}\) Gilbert had a tendency to stay at a job for about 2 or 3 weeks and be idle for a similar period of time before working again. He was not regarded as a good worker but he had "not come adversely under the notice of the Police."\(^{80}\)

The Aboriginal camp at Kingaroy that Gilbert stayed at occasionally was possibly one of about 25 segregated and police-supervised camps for Aborigines in Queensland at the time. These operated more or less on the basis of cheap labour reservoirs for local white people and the interaction with locals was regulated by various 'controls.'

When Eddie Gilbert did return to Cherbourg from time to time, he stayed with his step-sister, Effie Collins. His nephew, Henry Collins, recalled:

He stayed at my mother's place when he wasn't up at Kingaroy...he stayed most of the time up at Taabinga Village, outside of Kingaroy...a fringe dweller type of thing behind the cemetery. There was a station by that name and the station owner gave them a bit of ground.

\(^{77}\) ibid.

\(^{78}\) ibid. Despite this there was no evidence to support a prosecution for a breach of the Gambling Laws.

\(^{79}\) ibid.

\(^{80}\) ibid. Enquiries were made over time as to Gilbert's whereabouts.
He showed me how to hold the ball — how to spin...at Cherbourg. He used to tell me how he used to bowl. I only seen him play in a social match and he didn’t bowl full-pace, but even at half-pace he was still fast. We weren’t allowed to go and see him unless he called us because that was respect. We couldn’t go and sit down and talk unless he wanted us to.\textsuperscript{81}

At the end of 1946 a police report was completed on Eddie Gilbert in relation to issuing another six-month Exemption Certificate. The police had advised against it on the basis that he was prone to laziness and was a gambler.\textsuperscript{82} Despite the report he was able to gain permission to be off the settlement. A police report in July 1947 indicated that Gilbert was "engaged intermittently at casual farm work...and is frequently seen loafing about the town and about the Native Camps at Red Hill, Kingaroy.\textsuperscript{83}

The behaviour of Gilbert and his form of ‘resistance’ and reaction was generally rare for reserve Aborigines and it has been suggested:

These Aborigines have grown up believing that they have no rights at all and that they must always obey their white masters in every respect....this training ensures that they are unlikely to argue with the decisions of the manager of the reserve. Added to this is their experience of the fate of those who have argued with officialdom.\textsuperscript{84}

Government policy generally resulted in making Aborigines feel inferior and uncivilised, "that they must be protected against themselves, and their way of life lacked value.\textsuperscript{85} Under the powers of the Act the various reserve Superintendents had enormous powers of control over the

\textsuperscript{81} Henry Collins, personal interview, September 1990.

\textsuperscript{82} Internal control on the settlement was aided by the outside assistance of police.

\textsuperscript{83} ibid.

\textsuperscript{84} A. and R. Doobov. ‘Queensland: Australia’s Deep South,’ in F. Stevens. Racism: The Australian Experience. Volume 2. Sydney: Australia and New Zealand Book Co., 1973: 59. One informant (Nellie Sheridan) told how she was sent to Palm Island for several years because she had sat down for a short time while working in the hospital and had been considered disobedient for attempting to explain the reason to the white Nursing Sister.

\textsuperscript{85} The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 10 May 1991: 9.
lives of the inmates. To the inmates the Superintendent "was their protector, guardian, prosecutor, judge and jailer." 86

In a rare piece of enlightened support for the plight of the Aborigines, a reader of The Telegraph (Sydney) wrote to the paper in response to a report about the treatment of the great Aboriginal boxer from Queensland, Ron Richards:

"Is It a Crime To Be Black?"

Sir,- According to a press report, Ron Richards, half-caste aboriginal boxer, has been declared an aboriginal within the Act and can, and I presume is, to be kept in a native settlement against his will. Allegedly this is in an endeavour to rehabilitate him.

But whatever the motive behind the move, it comes as a distinct shock to hear that a man can be sent to what could amount to life imprisonment at the discretion of a civil servant, be he Director of Native Affairs or any other official.

To my way of thinking, this law that permits the imprisonment in settlements of our natives for no other reason than that they are aboriginals or half-castes is a travesty of British justice, and while we all condone it let us have done with this cant about the four freedoms and the equality of man.

Otherwise let us demand the Government grant these native people full civil rights and the freedom that is the birthright of every British subject: to be his own master and live and work where he pleases, and that his freedom be forfeit only when he breaks the law, and not because he is black or near black.

- CONSTANCE LANDEMAN. 87

People like Eddie Gilbert, who made a nuisance of themselves by not working, drinking, fighting, or absconding from the reserve, were normally deemed to require stern measures of control by

---

86 Blake, op. cit., 108.

87 The Telegraph (Sydney), 1946 - undated, newspaper clipping from personal file of Ron Richards, Queensland State Department of Community Services, 1988. The alcohol-affected life of Richards was outlined:

An appalling case is that of Ron Richards the boxer, whom the Sydney police had to take into custody for his own protection. One reason was that he was a prey to the violent assaults of Sydney larrikans, cruellest of their species, who, coming upon him friendless and helpless, were addicted to battering him to the pavement, each to boast afterwards "I knocked out Ron Richards." The Bulletin, 28 May 1947.
settlement officials. In some cases this could mean being sent away to other settlements, particularly to Palm Island. The removal of inmates to another settlement "was a punitive measure which also was intended to dissuade others from flouting the settlement regimen." Gilbert was partly immune to this treatment because of his success in cricket and the possibility of his gaining public sympathy for any harsh treatment.

Gilbert had sought a full exemption under the relevant Act and with regard to exemptions under the Act the Annual Report of 1947-48 was to suggest:

Whenever following investigation it is established that a half-blood or a full-blood aboriginal appears capable of controlling his own affairs, a certificate of exemption is issued to him. In some instances trial exemption covering a period of twelve months with option of renewal at the expiration of that period is issued. In other cases complete exemption is granted.

A report from the office of the Director of Native Affairs advised that the only Exemption Certificate issued to Gilbert was one issued in October 1945. Even so Gilbert was to escape any repercussions.

Because reports on his conduct, particularly from Kingaroy were not altogether satisfactory his Certificate has not been renewed; however, no action was taken with a view to having him returned to the Settlement as he apparently is able to obtain satisfactory employment to keep himself, and actually he is still being regarded as exempt and will continue to be so treated unless his conduct warrants otherwise.

The behaviour of Gilbert away from the settlement where he was a 'nuisance' was now to become much worse. He, like so many others, possibly illustrated how "reserve socialization can produce dependent, institutionalized people, many of whom neither desire nor are able to cope

88 Blake, op.cit., 126.
90 Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit., letter dated 18 October 1948.
91 ibid.
with life on the 'outside.' There was no real opportunity or incentive for Eddie Gilbert, or others like him, to make any real contribution to the wider community and, as a result, many Aborigines were destined to become 'fringe' dwellers and outcasts of society, only occasionally being part of it through work or the need for various services. Aborigines experienced deprivation, poverty, and a level of paternalism which left them poorly equipped to meet the demands of life. There is strong support for the claim that "The reserve system helped to entrench the status of Aborigines as a permanent underclass. It also served to perpetuate their landless condition."^3

Les Stewart, a Cherbourg inmate, remembered Eddie Gilbert from these years:

Wander around a fair bit. I met him in Brisbane a couple of times. He started to drink fairly heavily... He worked in the railway and got a job here and there - peanut picking, things like that... down to Brisbane and back here. He worked on here [Cherbourg] too. He did a bit of everything - hygiene work, cleaning up the place. He was very close with his friends and relations -- never deserted them, sort of stayed with them.4

Gilbert was arrested at Murgon on a charge of drunkenness in January, 1947. In one of the regular police reports on him Sergeant Gallagher was to report:

He is known to be fond of liquor, and drinks to excess when-ever he is able to get drink. He is inclined to be violent when under the influence of liquor. I have also found him to be a "cheeky" [insolent] and rather arrogant type of native.

In my opinion this native is not a suitable type to be granted exemption.5

In mid-1948 Gilbert was working on a peanut farm at Kingaroy. By April 1949, he was reported

---

^2 Guthrie, op.cit., 23.

^3 Blake, op.cit., 358.

^4 Les Stewart, personal interview, op.cit.

^5 Eddie Gilbert, personal file information, op.cit., 1949.
to be again living in the camp at Kingaroy and working in the area, but he was now "not considered to be a good worker." 96 Meanwhile, his wife, ‘Edie,’ was still living in Brisbane and apparently he would visit her from time to time, but indications are that the relationship was a very casual one and could have almost ‘failed’ for a second time.

Eddie Gilbert is remembered as being in South Brisbane in the 1950s, although this was almost certainly the late 1940s:

"He was a broken man by then, broken in spirit," Hurley said. "I don’t know if he drank, but I’d guess he did. He was very quiet and not very big. My mother was a good friend of his wife Edie [‘Edie’]. Mum and Auntie Edie played cards together a lot; there were always big card schools around and the blacks in South Brisbane gambled a lot." 97

The area of South Brisbane where the Aborigines gathered was Musgrave Park. In pre-contact times it was an area utilised by travelling tribes from a wide area on their way to meetings of tribes and festivals. Later it became a meeting place for Aborigines and the site of extensive group drinking and gambling.

During his trips to Kingaroy Eddie Gilbert occasionally visited his son, Eddie Barney, who had taken his grandparent’s surname. Eddie Barney recalled:

I was about 8 or 9. I never knew my father until my grandparents said, "This is your father, Eddie Gilbert." At that time I didn’t know that he was famous for bowling Bradman for a duck or anything like that. It just didn’t click. At the time when I first met Dad he was past his prime, he was in his 40s I suppose -- middle 40s -- and starting to hit the bottle a bit. 98

Eddie Barney’s grandparents, ‘Granny’ Toddy and Joe Barney, were very strict with the young Eddie and very protective of him, and he was very ‘close’ to them. If his father ever visited, one or both were always there.

---

96 ibid.

97 The Sunday-Mail (Brisbane), 15 January 1989.

98 Eddie Barney, personal interview, op.cit.
They talked good, they communicated all right but they didn't like his drinking. He [Gilbert] used to have a bit of a temper when he was drinking -- two types of personalities.\textsuperscript{99}

Although there was to be some contact with his father, Eddie Gilbert told his son very few stories about himself.

I got them from my other relations. Dad never actually told me. He wasn't that kind -- I'm the first black fellow to do this. He never told me that. I heard it from my grandparents. It never really hit me until I got older.

I can remember when I was young and playing cricket. He said to me, "Son", he say, "It's not how long you take a run-up to be a fast bowler. Look I only take 8 paces and the way I get my fast bowling is from the waist and the shoulder. You dip the shoulder and waist and take about 8 paces, that's all."

He said, "You don't have to go from me to half a mile back or a 100 yards back to get the ball to go at 90-100 miles an hour." I did it myself and it worked for me. I never really followed it right through. I thought I might follow in Dad's footsteps but I was always... in boxing.

When I used to go bowling I'd try to be like him but I couldn't be like him I had to do it my way. I couldn't say I'll be just as good as him.\textsuperscript{100}

During 1949 Gilbert began to show signs of increasing mental instability and various symptoms related to heavy drinking. It is quite likely that he was an alcoholic. Alcoholism is the result of multiple factors which include biological, psychological and cultural aspects, and among psychological factors are various emotional factors. One profile of the 'typical' alcoholic has suggested:

He has often been characterised as a passive, dependent, and hostile person who finds it difficult to express his anger and hostility and, instead, turns his anger in upon himself. That is to say, he hurts others by hurting himself through drinking. This profile is not limited to alcoholics, and many alcoholics do not manifest this behaviour.\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{99} ibid.

\textsuperscript{100} ibid.

While Gilbert was residing at the Pound Yard, Kingaroy, during 1949, complaints were made to the local police because he had been "wandering around apparently in a mental condition, carrying a stick and stones and others are afraid of him." He kept on waking up people at night and they were anxious to do something about him. It is quite possible that he was suffering from alcoholic hallucination, along with other problems. Investigations were made and later a letter outlining the circumstances was forwarded to the Superintendent at Cherbourg:

Sir,

I have to report with reference to Eddie Gilbert, and further to my telephonic communication on the 2nd and 3rd inst., [April] that on the 3rd inst., Gilbert was brought to this Office, and closely questioned by me, [sic] To me he appeared to be sane, but he stated for the two past months has had not been sleeping too well, and was under the impression that persons were, and could advance no reason why they should give him such a hiding.

He was then conveyed to the Kingaroy District Hospital, where he was examined by Dr. Ottone, who stated that he was not fit to certify as insane, but was verging on same. He then prescribed medicine for him to take for his nerves.

For some weeks past other Aboriginals has complained to me about Gilbert's conduct, regarding his roaming about the camps at night carrying a stick, yet he never at any time threatened any of them, but they are unable to sleep through same and are in fear of him doing them some harm. ...

As the Dr. declines to issue a certificate certifying him insane, it appears to me that he should be placed in a Settlement, preferably Palm Island.

D. Spada. (Signature)
Sergt 1/C 2603.

102 ibid.

103 ibid. Alcoholic hallucination involves vivid auditory hallucinations following the cessation or reduction of alcohol ingestion in individuals with alcohol dependence. Individuals with this disorder often have extensive well-documented histories of alcohol dependence including clear-cut patterns of increased tolerance or withdrawal symptoms.

104 ibid.
Immediately after being examined Gilbert reverted to his previous behaviour and the Acting Superintendent at Cherbourg (McDonald) decided that he should be returned to the settlement. On his arrival "it was quite evident that he was suffering delusions of grandeur and other hallucinations." This behaviour was of concern to other inmates who had contact with him. The Settlement Medical Officer (Dr. Grimmett) examined Gilbert and concluded that, "although he is not mentally balanced, he is not, in any way, dangerous and that treatment and nursing in the settlement hospital would probably prove sufficient to ensure his recovery." In a surprising level of awareness Gilbert indicated that "his condition may be the result of syphilis and has taken a blood test which will be submitted to Health Authorities in Brisbane for the usual test." 

Even though he was a patient Eddie apparently spent some time ‘working’ in the Hospital as a wardsman, a job he had done before. While assisting he started talking to the doctor and had delusions about where he was and was "saying he was someone else." 

A friend of his, Eileen South, who used to go and see him play cricket in Brisbane when she was working there, recalled:

Eddie and I were great pals. When I went away [1939] I lost contact with him. When I came back he sort of wasn’t all there — his memory was all gone. I don’t really know what happened.

On the 5th of December 1949, while at the Settlement Hospital, Gilbert suddenly became sick and was reported as having general paralysis and even more marked abnormal behaviour. He was

---

105 ibid.
106 ibid.
107 ibid.
108 Vince Bunda, personal interview, op.cit.
also reported as having a marked level of euphoria, so it was decided to send him to Brisbane.110

Cyril (‘Grumpy’) Fisher, an inmate at Cherbourg, remembered when Eddie went away:

They said they’d help him out but they wouldn’t do it. He was losing his memory and all that. There was no excuse for that – they should have helped him out.111

Eddie Gilbert’s last glimpses of settlement life would have shown differences from earlier times. Prejudice, however, still existed in its worst forms.

Harold Blair, a former Purga Mission (near Ipswich) resident, was born at Cherbourg and went on to become a world-renowned singer. In 1949 he visited Cherbourg and, while in nearby Murgon, he expressed his disgust at what he termed as "obvious discrimination between white people and those of the aboriginal race."112 He went on to say that he had "never seen any local authorities make their discrimination so public."113

Harold Blair was commenting on the notice in Lamb Street erected outside the brick convenience erected by the Murgon Shire Council. The notice reads that "this area is reserved for ladies. The convenience for natives is in Gore Street."114

Despite the geographical closeness of the town of Murgon to Cherbourg there was great cultural dissimilarity. It was apparent that, to a certain extent, a ‘colour bar’ existed in Murgon which excluded the Cherbourg people from certain places and certain activities. There were usually designated seats at the pictures and local shops would not serve the Aborigines, unless it was a

110 Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit.
111 Cyril (‘Grumpy’) Fisher, personal interview, April 1990.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
special occasion. Aborigines were not allowed alcohol but it could be procured by paying high prices. Locals were intolerant of Aborigines who might be 'hanging about' the town without any apparent reason. The attitudes of the local people varied in intensity but most clearly held the view that they were 'superior' to the Aborigines, often despite good relations with at least some of the Cherbourg people. The broadly accepted racist views of the local population could be qualified by special circumstances. A few well-known Cherbourg people such as Eddie Gilbert, Frank Fisher and Jack O'Chin were seen as contributing to the area and they were identified as being exceptions to the usual Aborigine and not regarded as part of the generally spoken-of group, the 'blacks.' 'Europeanised' Aborigines were more favourably looked upon and treated than other groups. However, this alone was not enough to allow for changes to some of the local 'rules.' These 'special' Aborigines, in the short and long term, could have an important role in moderating or changing at least some white people's opinions, especially if the 'special' Aborigines had the attention of the wider press-reading public. Gilbert, during his career and afterwards, had a degree of popularity which cut across racial lines. There is some evidence of local sympathy and tolerance for the plight of Gilbert after his cricket career, and genuine attempts were made by some local white people to give him work despite his 'problems.' Fred Kratzmann played cricket with and against Gilbert and has suggested that "it was all a bit too much for him. He got a bit uptight maybe because they gave him a bad run."

Fred Kratzmann, personal interview, April 1992.
Gilbert had been a man of sport and, by 1949, a Welfare Association at Cherbourg was responsible for organising and conducting sport and other activities such as movies and the Show. There was some hope of a repeat of previous successes of the sporting teams. Perhaps the best way to look at what was to be Gilbert’s permanent departure from Cherbourg is to quote from part of the Cricket report from this time.

Under the presidency of Mr. Smith, the Cherbourg Cricket Association has functioned smoothly and efficiently. Owing to the departure of seasonal workers for the sugar area, the four teams who commenced Settlement competition were reduced to three teams. Of these, Hornets have a slight lead over Busy Bees, with Rovers in third place. Petrol restrictions and transport difficulties have hampered the arrangement of outside matches. Next season it is intended to affiliate with the Murgon-Kilkivan cricket zone.\textsuperscript{116}

Eddie Gilbert was admitted to the Brisbane General Hospital on the 6th December 1949 where he was reported as being "violent; confused; noisy; unco-operative; no interest." On the 7th of December he was, as required under 'The Mental Hygiene Act of 1939' (Section 21), examined by two doctors and found to be insane. Dr. J.U. Siedlecky was to state on the Medical Certificate that the "Pt. [patient] is disorientated in time and place. Says he is king of all Australia, right down to New South Wales. Has given me permission to have free sugar and tea." The second report, by Dr. N. Goldman, commented that he was "Very restless and violent and had to be restrained. Talks nonsense."

Figure 10.1 Gilbert in the late 1940s.

---

1 Eddie Gilbert, clinical file, Wacol Hospital, medical certificate, 7 December 1949.
2 ibid.
3 ibid.
As a consequence of this examination, Eddie Gilbert was transferred to Brisbane Mental Hospital (later the Wolston Park Hospital) at Goodna, which was, in both appearance and function, a custodial Hospital. During 1949 there was a total of 2,916 patients under treatment.4

The 1950-51 Annual Report of the Department of Health painted an idyllic picture of life in this asylum:

The general welfare of the patients is being maintained and standards of food and clothing progressively raised.

There is an abundance of fresh vegetables from the market gardens and fresh milk is provided from the dairy.

Entertainments were held regularly in the recreation hall, comprising picture shows and concerts weekly throughout the year, with dances in addition during the cooler months. There were also occasional afternoon band concerts. Regular 'bus trips to the seaside were provided for patients, and parties of patients were also taken by 'bus to occasional sporting fixtures.

The religious interests of all patients were safeguarded and services of the various denominations held at the hospital regularly.5

On his admission to the Brisbane Mental Hospital at Goodna Eddie Gilbert was found to be "suffering from a dense dementia"6 and certified as being insane on the 8th December 1949. He was recorded as being a pensioner/cricketer. Distinguishing marks were recorded as scars on his right knee and right shoulder.7

At an examination on the 12th of December 1949, his behaviour was reported:

Patient unable to give any account of himself. When seen bedstead had to be removed from room patient sitting on floor walking [walking] son riding on horseback on opposite wall. later [Later] calling out for father...? GPI [General Paralysis of the Insane].8

---


5 Ibid.


7 Ibid., Pension no. 386185. File no. BM 152.56.

8 Ibid., clinical report, 12 December 1949.
This observation is a sad depiction involving two people in his life with whom he had little association. One, a son who he had no part in raising and saw only occasionally, and a father from whom he was separated when he was placed in a dormitory as a young boy and saw only intermittently as he grew up.

His behaviour was not good and he had visual hallucinations and was restless and violent, particularly towards the nurses. He would kick anyone who came near him and on one occasion he kicked one unfortunate attendant in the testicles. He also made an attempt to 'escape' by climbing a fence between wards. His hallucinations continued and he was once found in the ward attempting to get his money. He again tried to abscond towards the end of December.9

On the same day (20th of December 1949) that Gilbert "tried to escape"10 a "specimen of blood [was] taken for W.R. & gold test"11 and a lumbar puncture was performed on him under anaesthetic. In the lumbar puncture procedure for detecting syphilis, a sample of cerebrospinal fluid surrounding the spinal column is taken by needle aspiration. One of the tests is the VDRL (Venereal Disease Research Laboratory test), which tests the presence of antibodies within the spinal fluid. This test is very strongly positive when there is active infection and becomes negative, or nearly so, when the infection has been adequately treated.

Another test to check on syphilis was the Wasserman test. His Wasserman reaction at this time was strongly positive (4+). The results of the tests found that he had acquired syphilis and the assumption was made, based on other tests (such as pupil accommodation and contraction), and observations of aspects of his behaviour (such as his delusions of grandeur and episodes of violence), that these were associated with the progression of this disease. Of all infections, syphilis has played the most active part in causing mental disease and general paresis

9 ibid., 20 December and 30 December 1949.
10 ibid.
11 ibid.
can develop from five to thirty or more years after the primary untreated infection with syphilis. A diagnosis of G.P.I. (General Paralysis of the Insane), or more correctly Dementia Paralytica,\textsuperscript{12} was made. The progression of this disease and the responses of individuals vary.

In the early stages the sufferer tends to have an apathy and unconcern that at first may be mistaken for laziness. A change of mood is common and there is often a high degree of anxiety. Delusions usually occur at some period of the disease and for many subjects expansive delusions may reach the height of absurdity. Hallucinations occasionally occur. If syphilis is not treated in a reasonable period of time, it causes a permanent degree of dementia. It is not clear from information reviewed whether the degenerative changes that occur in the brain are caused by the action of the spirochaetes themselves or by their toxic products.

Frequently the mental symptoms develop so insidiously that the patient’s family has not recognized that a deteriorating change in personality has been taking place. The early symptoms consist largely of an extension and exaggeration of previous personality traits. Other early symptoms may be irritability, fatigue, difficulty in concentration, depression, periods of confusion, disturbed sleep, and headache. The early paretic individual is often opinionated and perhaps quarrelsome. Frequently he becomes neglectful of his dress, unkempt in appearance, inconsiderate of others, and forgetful of social amenities and proprieties and manifests an insidious breakdown of higher ethical and cultural sentiments and standards. The moderate user of alcohol may become dissipated; sexual activities may become excessive. The man whose previous life has been quite exemplary may not only suddenly show some surprising defect of character but feel no concern for his dereliction.\textsuperscript{13}

The process, with its progressive degeneration of nerve cells has been confused with conditions such as Alzheimer’s disease, Pick’s disease, senile dementia and other conditions.


The brain syndrome associated with syphilitic meningoencephalitis, known as general paresis, general paralysis of the insane, or dementia paralytic, is a disorder produced by progressive syphilitic meningoencephalitis leading to degeneration of brain parenchyma with an infiltration of interstitial elements. Clinically, general paresis is characterised by comprehensive but variable syndrome of neurological and mental disturbances associated with fairly constant serological changes.

\textsuperscript{13} ibid., 225.
Over the years clinical records and various reports were made on Eddie Gilbert's condition. Some of these written records are illegible or unintelligible. They were not regular or accurate and varied in form from a standard observational type of entry to general comments and observations on his behaviour and general condition and the treatments administered. Records also outline the results of medical tests (such as X-rays), routine reviews and interviews conducted with him.

Regular progress reports were requested by the Department of Native Affairs in Brisbane. Some of these reports show a difference in comments as outlined in clinical records and partly display the opinion of the person completing the report based as it was on the accepted diagnosis. In some cases these reports were a summary or a combination of Hospital records. There was no uniformity in the reports and although fairly regular, they varied in length from a few lines to a couple of paragraphs.

For a consistent and systematic outline of Gilbert's life to be presented there is little point in attempting to ignore the events associated with his years in hospital. The intention here is not to review health care in Queensland per se, merely explore issues relevant to Gilbert, his experiences and the debilitating effects of the illnesses/conditions he suffered.

The syphilis diagnosis opens up a number of suggestions. Some evidence has suggested that he had congenital syphilis, a long-term condition whose effects could be used to explain, in part, some of the physical problems he had during his career. For example, Vince Bunda, a Cherbourg inmate, indicated that he had been informed by an attendant who had looked after Gilbert that "Gilbert was suffering from hereditary syphilis which had been transmitted to him through prior generations."15

---

14 His closest living relations were prepared to allow access to his records so that his complete story could be told. Even so strict procedures were in force with access to information.

If the diagnosis of hereditary (congenital) syphilis were correct, then Gilbert’s life and career could be conveniently portrayed in the light of his being a victim of one of the most destructive effects of white colonisation. However, medical evidence shows that he did not have congenital syphilis and this was a ‘red-herring’ that arose at some time. Also, most infants born with this condition die before they reach seven years of age.

An examination of medical and other reports would suggest that although he was suffering from syphilis in 1949, the time when he contacted the disease is unclear. It is remotely possible that he may have had it for many years, perhaps during part of his first-class cricket career. His wife, ‘Edie,’ had the disease in 1942 and was treated for it. Eddie and ‘Edie,’ though separated at this time, had contact with each other and either one may have transmitted the disease. This appears the most likely situation. It is quite possible that at this time he may also have had other problems unrelated to syphilis and resulting from his mental state and drinking.

Some sources of information have suggested that Eddie Gilbert "got syphilis off a white woman," possibly, in a ‘cat house’ [brothel], but this could have easily been a rumour that became a ‘fact’ over the years. What is certain is that Eddie was either not treated for the condition in its early stages or may have been inadequately treated. His heavy drinking and general lifestyle at the time may have helped contribute to the development of the disease to a more advanced stage by 1949. Years after his admission University of Queensland medical students during visits to the Hospital would have Eddie Gilbert pointed out as being in an advanced stage of syphilis, tertiary syphilis.

As well as the syphilis infection there are a multitude of factors and conditions that could have had a role in the development of his physical and mental condition. These include genetics, lifestyle, alcohol consumption, emotional and physical stress, diet and other factors. By the time

---

16 Various informants, confidential comments.

17 Dr. Tony O’Loan, personal communication, February 1991.
he was admitted to the Hospital he was already a ‘goner’ with regard to his mental decline.

On his admission to Brisbane Mental Hospital, Gilbert had been drinking heavily for a number of years. His heavy drinking has been previously outlined in some detail but is briefly restated here because of its significance to other health problems. The years of heavy drinking may have caused some long-term effects on his health although resulting permanent alcohol damage is not always demonstrated in a post-mortem. Alcohol can affect the neurones of the brain while other parts of the body may recover to a greater extent.

In the early stages of his syphilis Gilbert’s high alcohol intake may have either magnified or disinhibited any syphilitic behaviour, or, in combination with his syphilis infection, may even have taken over or masked other symptoms. Any perceptible changes in his behaviour at the time may have been attributed to his drinking, although this was more than likely only part of the story. While alcohol may well have initially been a factor in his behaviour its role and effect in relation to other contributors to his mental decline are unclear.

In response to the diagnosis of syphilis appropriate ‘treatments’ were undertaken. Some treatments he had to endure may have contributed in some way to his physical or mental condition.

Eddie Gilbert underwent various treatments with malarial blood during 1950. The malarial infection was a toxic shock treatment which causes an artificial fever in the patient. In many cases this resulted in an arrest of the paretic process and an improvement in the patient.

Penicillin proved to be an effective means of arresting the physical progress of both general syphilis and neurosyphilis. In greatly overactive patients and for certain other patients it was common to precede the administration of penicillin by a course of electric shock therapy. Gilbert was given at least three treatments of electric shock therapy between February and

---

18 Eddie Gilbert, clinical file, Wacol Hospital, 28 December 1950. For example, one such malarial infusion took place on 9 March 1950.
May. With regard to the effects of this particular method of treatment, Peter Jordan has said:

Before the advent of tranquilizers, in the mid-1950s, the control over convulsion which resulted from electric shock therapy was limited, and the patient had to be held down by attendants to prevent such convulsions resulting in broken bones, which on occasion did occur.

Eddie Gilbert was put on what would prove to be a long course of penicillin treatment to control his syphilis. His initial treatment was 50,000 units 3-hourly. It was customary to give daily injections for periods of ten to twenty days or longer. In some cases repeated or long-term programmes of use were adopted and this appears to have been the case for Gilbert. Regular blood tests were used to control/monitor his condition and Gilbert seems to have coped with his syphilis quite well.

Early in January 1950 Gilbert had "No idea of day, month or year - no idea where he is." About two weeks later Eddie complained about other patients and that "Some of them in ward trying to get his money £200, £400, £5,000. Let it go. disorientated. found out this morning he is in asylum, got a surprise." In contrast to Gilbert's concerns about his 'money' he in fact only had a balance of £5/5/4 in his bank account. The Department decided that this small balance would be expended "by forwarding periodically amounts to the Brisbane Mental

19 ibid., 14 February; 3 April and 22 May 1950. In early 1950 Gilbert suffered a fracture of the left lower ulna for which a plaster splint was applied. This was removed on 15 February. Although not recorded in clinical notes it is very possible that the fracture was caused during unrecorded electric shock therapy.

20 Peter Kenneth Jordan. Mental Health Services of the Queensland Government 1920-1962. B. Social Work, University of Queensland, 1973: 107. Around 1955 chlorpromazine and other tranquilising drugs were introduced and there was a decrease in the use of active physical treatment.


22 ibid., 18 January 1950. There was no evidence of hallucinations at this time.

23 ibid. On 4 January he wanted "to fight a chinese pat. [patient] whom he thinks is taking his money."
Hospital for the purchase of luxuries, etc.\textsuperscript{24}

During the 1950s regular Hospital reports to the Department of Native Affairs about his condition were based on the "well-known picture of a grandiose, expansive, paranoid, disinhibited state against a background of progressive intellectual deterioration."\textsuperscript{25} Typical reports generally indicated that he had not improved mentally and was "idle and inclined to violence."\textsuperscript{26} In early March he was "ordered into restraint"\textsuperscript{27} because of his violent behaviour. At the same time as this record a clinical entry indicated: "Says he owns the place paid £80,000 has over billion in bank thinks he is at Kingaroy - very vague."\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{24} Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit., 20 February 1950. The balance of Gilbert’s account was in Queensland Aboriginals Account S2127 at the Commonwealth Saving Bank, Brisbane. This Account incorporated all balances of all Aboriginals controlled by the Department. In October 1945 Gilbert had a balance of £7/3/10 in his account.


\textsuperscript{26} Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit. A ‘straight’ jacket was commonly used.

\textsuperscript{27} ibid., 9 March 1950.

\textsuperscript{28} ibid.
In response to the concerns of relatives on the settlement the Acting Superintendent of Cherbourg wrote to the Medical Superintendent at Goodna:

CHERBOURG ABORIGINAL SETTLEMENT
via MURGON.
6th March 1950.

The Medical Officer,
Brisbane Mental Home,
GOODNA.

Re Eddie Gilbert.

You are referred to my enquiry of the 9th instant regarding the condition of the abovenamed. For the satisfaction of his relatives here I should be happy to receive a report of his condition and also of the advisability of permitting relatives here to visit him. I would not like the relatives or the Department to incur the expenses of the visit to Eddie if his condition was such that he would not be able to appreciate the visit.

(Signature)
Acting Superintendent.

Written on the bottom of the letter was a comment from the Hospital by F.K.M. to the effect that he was: "Not impaired mentally. He could appreciate a visit from his relatives."30

In April 1950, Gilbert attacked another patient (Patrick B.) with a chair and fell over the broken chair.31 Early in May he was reported as 'quiet' but a couple of days later he was violent at night and had to be sedated.32 The medical practitioner's report section of his file indicates that he was taken out of restraint four days after this behaviour so it is apparent that he had been 'subdued' for this time. This action did not curb his violent outbursts and over the next couple of months he attacked a number of staff.33 For example, in May he "Attacked members

30 ibid.
31 ibid., April 1950.
32 ibid., 5 May 1950.
33 ibid.
of staff while being taken to bath room - secluded for 2 hrs."\textsuperscript{34}

During May 1950, he received another lumbar puncture. This was repeated in July and "a report by telephone gave a doubtful positive result"\textsuperscript{35} so he was tested again. His Wasserman test now had a result of 2+. At an injection of malarial blood at the end of the year Gilbert's lungs were reported to be 'marked' but his heart was good.\textsuperscript{36}

Also in 1950, with Gilbert in the asylum, Eddie's half-sister, Effie Arnold (Collins), and her husband Jack, had written to the Department and were desirous of visiting him. Over the years they were to prove to be regular visitors until the death of Effie in 1963.\textsuperscript{37} Sam Chambers, a Cherbourg resident, would occasionally inquire about Eddie after Effie's visits and be told by her: "Well, he's all right."\textsuperscript{38}

Eddie Barney was interested in visiting his father.

> When I was about fourteen, I suppose, I used to go to Cherbourg for holidays and I'd stay at Auntie Effie's place. I would ask her to take me with her to visit him but she would not let me go as she said it would only make him fret.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{34} ibid., 11 May 1950. He was transferred to ward M5 at the beginning of the month.

\textsuperscript{35} ibid., July 1950.

\textsuperscript{36} ibid., 28 December 1950.

\textsuperscript{37} Eddie Gilbert, personal file information, Department of Community Services, Brisbane, 1988. Effie died on the 29th January 1963. At one visit in 1962 Effie visited with a couple of friends. She appears to have had her expenses met by the Department during visits to Eddie.


\textsuperscript{39} Eddie Barney, op.cit., March 1992.
Figure 10.2 Eddie Gilbert at Wacol Hospital in early 1970s.
In November 1950 Edith Gilbert wrote a letter asking about her husband.

8 - 11 - 50

Hut 25
Victoria Park
Herston Rd
Brisbane

Sir

I am writing to you regarding my Husband Eddie Gilbert Ward 5. I cannot personally contact you when ever I visit the Institution to learn from you as to my Husband's Actual Condition - and if in your opinion he is Making any Progress - and what is the future hope of his recovery to good health.

Thanking you (Sir) for the necessary Information

Yours Respectfully
Edith Gilbert
(Signature)

The Medical Superintendent responded:

Dear Madam,

Re: EDDIE GILBERT.

In reply to your letter of the 8th instant Dr. Zeith reports that your Husband has not changed greatly in the past months. He is still rather confused and cannot converse in normal fashion although he appears to have lost many of the peculiar ideas he had previously. It does not seem likely much further improvement will occur.

Yours faithfully,

(Initials).

MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT.

---

40 Eddie Gilbert, clinical record, *op. cit.*, reports and correspondence.

41 Ibid.
Some time after this letter 'Edie' went to live at Urangan with her sister and got a job. She later met and "picked up with another chap, a white man, Les Hayball."42 They lived together until he died, and she died some years later, about 1969.

Gilbert's behaviour had fluctuated during 1950 and he had periods of no violence. In early 1951 he was stated as having a 'diminishing paralysis.'43 He "does not seem to show any interest in outside activities such as cricket."44 Over the next couple of years he continued to be disinterested and grossly disorientated both in time and place. "I am an important person, but will not elaborate."45 At one time he "Gives his name as Anderson [his father's Christian name]."46

On the 12th May 1953, a report was made about the 'shell' of a man that was Eddie Gilbert:

Physical condition: good  
Behaviour: clean no work  
Personality: aloof but often violent. Apathetic  
Speech: Answers questions curtly quietly  
Memory: poor  
Hallucinations: Appears to hear voices.  
Delusions: not marked.47

For many years the Wolston Park Hospital was faced with the serious problems of extensive overcrowding and "lack of nursing staff, medical staff and other professional officers, including social workers, occupational therapists and psychologists."48 From the mid-1950s the physical

43 Eddie Gilbert, clinical file, op.cit., 29 January 1951. In February he received a typhoid injection - perhaps with the same purpose in mind as his malarial infusions.
44 ibid.
45 ibid., 9 May 1951.
46 ibid., 30 August 1951.
47 ibid., 12 May 1953.
48 Jordan, op.cit., 110. Since the 1980s mental health services have greatly improved.
care of the patients slowly improved with the introduction of visiting specialists and services such as regular dental care.

A Commonwealth Government report in 1955 referred to the overcrowding:

Overcrowding for the institution was 909, but, with dayroom space taken over for dormitories, this really represents a figure of 1173, or an overcrowding percentage of 95%. Certain of the wards were very poorly maintained. All female, but no male, wards had laundryettes [sic]. The overcrowding commonly led to beds being placed down corridors and into bathroom space and, in some cases, beds spilled over into dining-rooms, and floor beds were so placed between other beds, that patients getting out of bed had to step on the floor beds. The overcrowding naturally led to insufficient storage space.

Thirty male T.B. patients were in a ward of 53, and no adequate protective precautions were taken. However, despite all these gross handicaps, an effort was being made to maintain a fair level of treatment. 49

A feature of the institution was the attempt made to create a pleasant external appearance. Such undertakings were in contrast to the difficulties confronting administrators and staff concerning treatment of patients inside the wards.

In 1954, Eddie Gilbert was often disorientated, mumbling and answers simple questions quietly. "Won't wear boots. Untidy. No work," although he "eats and sleeps well" 50 Eddie would range from not talking much to ‘talking’ with his wife. "Used to be violent but no recent violence. Very little mumbled conversation. Often preoccupied." 51


50 Eddie Gilbert, clinical record, op.cit., 1 June 1954.

51 ibid., 16 May, 15 July and 3 September 1954. On 3 September "says I can do no thing [sic] for him."
A report, at the end of 1954, indicated that he was in "good bodily health but that his mental condition showed no improvement." His disorientation was still evident in 1955 and he was "Muttering to himself but will not speak to other patients. Untidy in appearance." 

Eddie Gilbert was referred to the Queensland Radium Institute during 1956 as he had a hole in his lip. This may have been caused by his smoking and was possibly related to treatment he received during the 1940s.

When a person is prone to violence and in a ward situation with other people who may have a similar inclination then the risk of physical injury is great. In January 1957, and following on from earlier occurrences of violence involving fellow inmates, Eddie sustained a laceration over his right eye after being pushed by another patient (R.D.). Around this time it was also observed that his "Mental and physical condition in status quo. Speech - slow mumbled words only. Clean. Does not work." 

---

52 ibid.
53 ibid., 11 September 1955.
54 ibid., 24 July 1956.
55 ibid., 21 January 1957.
56 ibid., 14 February 1957.
One of the regular reports from the Hospital to the Department of Native Affairs in 1956 was to state:

GOODNA: 7th June, 56

The A/Deputy Director of Native Affairs
William Street,
BRISBANE B.7

Dear Sir,

In reply to your letter of the 29th ultimo, I have to advise that there is no appreciable change in Mr. Eddie Gilbert's mental condition. He remains asocial, withdrawn and selfabsorbed [sic], requiring much prompting to enter into conversation, and is monosyllabic in his answers. He is still auditorily hallucinated and sits muttering to himself on frequent occasions.

He remains untidy, and requires nursing care and supervision. Mr. Gilbert remains in good physical health and condition.

Yours faithfully,
(Initials)
MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT.57

Over the next couple of years his behaviour was apparently not as aggressive. In September 1958 he fell down stairs while going to bed and cut his lip which required sutures.58 Eddie usually ignored other people and seemed pre-occupied. He "sits outside staring into space all day long. He smiled innately and whispered to himself; Unable to give an account of himself says I don’t know...not co-operative."59 "Sits muttering to himself and suddenly swung around and said ‘Where do you come from.’"60

Along with his mental condition, and partly because of the fact that he was an Aborigine isolated from his social and cultural background, Eddie Gilbert may well have built up barriers to

57 ibid., Report to Department of Native Affairs, 1956.
58 ibid., 11 September 1958.
59 ibid., 16 October 1959.
60 ibid., 29 March 1960.
his existence. The manner in which this was done may have helped worsen his condition. The drugs and various treatments (or lack of treatments) that were administered to him could also have had some influence. In addition, differences in physical characteristics and responses to various tests as well as aspects of an individual’s personality can often affect the condition of the sufferer.

A further injury to Eddie occurred in 1960 when he was pushed over by another inmate in the bathroom. At the end of the same year he was transferred to another ward (M 12) from the one he had been in for some time. In an event that could be viewed with some sentimental significance, although Gilbert would probably not have known this, he "climbed [a] fence onto [the] cricket ground at 5.30 p.m." He was returned to the ward by staff and the male office was notified. Apparently he was attempting to return to his old ward.

During 1961 he was reported as wanting relations to visit him. Also in 1961 a report to the Department on his condition stated that he had neurosyphilis and was prone to violence.

Around this period of time there were various new approaches made in treatment but many patients did not benefit.

The nursing staff who had most contact with patients, still adopted methods of locking unruly patients in rooms, or using physical force to quieten them, or giving patients extra doses of sedatives to curb their activities. Expression of hostile feelings was not acceptable within the wards. Many of these practices were carried out without the medical staff being aware, for in a number of the chronic wards the medical officers only visited patients when requested by the nursing staff.

---

61 This was despite a personal file record on the 27th October 1959 that he was "well accustomed [sic] to hospital life."


63 ibid., 3 December 1960.

64 Eddie Gilbert, personal file information, op.cit.

65 ibid., 1961.
Patients...had tobacco rationed according to work done and their mail censored. Male patients were not allowed to shave themselves, and bathing of patients was always closely supervised. They were given no privacy in this regard.  

Mid-way through 1962 Eddie Gilbert was "Completely out of touch of reality. Doesn't seem aware of my presence. Talks to himself and looks around. No work."  

His physical condition was not good although later in the year he was able to dress and feed himself.  

He made no attempt to answer questions. Reports from 1963 may indicate deficiencies in earlier reports by indicating certain varied responses at times.

In a surprising and most unlikely development an improvement in his general condition less than a year later was reported. Eddie was reported as being in good physical condition and although he would not answer questions he was: "Quite manageable. Clean and tidy."  

He was soon after reported as saying he was 'alright' when asked but otherwise would just sit and stare into space.  

At another time he was observed as sitting and talking and gesticulating to himself and although he answered no questions he "can ask for a smoke."  

A report made in the latter part of 1964 mentioned that Eddie "doesn't communicate at all mumbles unintelligibly."  

His original diagnosis of G.P.I. was confirmed at the time, his physical condition was observed as good, he could obey simple commands, and was well-behaved in the ward. 

---

66 Jordan, op.cit., 194.  
68 ibid., 3 December 1962.  
69 ibid., 14 May 1963.  
70 ibid., 8 October 1963.  
71 ibid.  
72 ibid., 6 October 1964.  
73 ibid.
In June 1965 the Director of Native Affairs wrote to the Medical Superintendent inquiring about Gilbert. The Medical Superintendent replied:

BRISBANE SPECIAL HOSPITAL,

Director of Native Affairs,
William St.,
BRISBANE.

Dear Sir,

Re: Eddie GILBERT.

In reply to your letter of 16th instant, you are advised that the above-named patient is remarkably preserved for his age, other than for his grey hair, his appearance is little different than it was in the days when he played cricket for Queensland.

Mentally, however, he is much the same as he has been for years, preferring solitude, and if disturbed would be unpredictable.

He has no conversation although at times he mutters unintelligibly [sic] to himself.

His prospects of discharge would be very slim.

Yours faithfully,
(C.R. Boyce)
MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT.

Just over two years later a similar report was made:

mumbles to himself very seldom speaks - except to ask for a cigarette. Does nothing constructive just walks around. Quiet. No...response to questions.

Shortly afterwards, in a previously unreported change in his behaviour, he became disturbed at night and was sedated. This sedation may have become a regular but unrecorded treatment.

74 ibid., reports and correspondence, 23 June 1965.
75 ibid., 16 November 1966.
In 1966 the Sunday Truth (Brisbane) showed that interest in Eddie Gilbert was evident when it printed a feature article about him. In part, it said:

The inclusion of Gilbert in Queensland’s Sheffield Shield team for six successive seasons was a tribute to his steady character and even temperament.

....

Eddie Gilbert’s memorial is his achievement on the field.

That stands as a reminder of the debt Australian cricket owes to Aboriginals, and what the game has lost through prejudice.\(^6\)

The newspaper report made no reference to his current state of health.

Further tests were conducted in 1967 to monitor Gilbert’s syphilis treatment. Because of his large amount of brain damage Gilbert was reported as being "incapable of looking after himself in the community"\(^7\) but was still considered well enough to go out for weekend leave with relatives. This suggestion was made despite the fact that his "mental state [was] not improved at all and [it] does not appear there is any likelihood of any improvement."\(^8\) He was remembered in Brisbane as "coming out a couple of times and going back,"\(^9\) but this did not eventuate because Gilbert’s brother-in-law (Jack Arnold) was not able adequately to look after him mainly due to the fact that he (Arnold) was a severe diabetic.\(^10\) A report a month after the comment suggesting that he might be allowed out on leave was to indicate that he was: "Too resistive for L.P. [leave pass]."\(^11\)

\(^{6}\) Sunday Truth (Brisbane), 5 June 1966: 74.

\(^{7}\) Eddie Gilbert, personal file information, op.cit.

\(^{8}\) ibid.

\(^{9}\) Henry Collins, personal interview, September 1990.

\(^{10}\) Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit. Other factors would have been that Jack Arnold "would have nothing to offer Eddie in the way of comfort which Eddie would not already receive where he is." - 18 October 1967.

\(^{11}\) Eddie Gilbert, clinical file, op.cit., 10 November 1967.
During June of 1968 Eddie received what appears to be the last of a long and repeated treatment with penicillin. His condition, as already mentioned, was diagnosed as tertiary (or neurosyphilis), which was a final stage in the course of the disease. In relation to the treatment of syphilis it has been suggested:

When a patient has such complication, treatment can arrest the infection but not the degenerative changes. The outlook for the patient then depends on how much damage to body tissues has already occurred. Complicated treatments of many types may be required after routine penicillin treatment has been given.\(^2\)

It seems that he preferred solitude and had been affected by his condition for many years.

At the end of 1969 he was "relatively impaired over health"\(^3\) and he "would not settle for the pathologist to take blood"\(^4\) for routine syphilis testing. In another observation he was reported as being prone to outbursts of aggression.\(^5\)

In April 1970, Eddie received what is obviously long overdue dental work when he had two extractions performed and very thick scaling on both sides of his teeth removed.\(^6\) Other dental work to make up for obvious earlier neglect was performed over the ensuing years. Later in the year he became sick with pneumonia but recovered to return to good physical condition and "staring into space."\(^7\)

---


\(^3\) ibid., 4 November 1969.

\(^4\) ibid., 6 November 1969. Blood was taken for W.R. and VDRL tests. Test results from 19 September indicated that he was ‘reactive’ to 1/5 Kolmer, the VDRL and Reiter tests.

\(^5\) ibid.

\(^6\) ibid., 10 March 1970. Shifted to ward M 10 on the 13th.

\(^7\) ibid., 26 October 1970.
A report in late 1970 indicated that "it would be to Eddie's advantage if he received a
visit from a relative as he has not received a visitor for some time,"\[88\] Shortly after this his
nephew, Henry Collins, applied to visit.\[89\] Henry recalled:

> He hardly ever said anything. When I first went there he didn't recognise me but
after I stayed a while and talked to him he knew who I was -- "You're Effies' eldest child."...so we'd walk and talk. He was starting to remember. He was quiet and spoke in a soft voice. We'd go for a walk or to the canteen or something and sit down...he'd sit there for a little while before he'd talk. He'd hardly ever talked about his cricket. He talked about things at home -- about Kingaroy -- and he talked about Maryborough... that's where the Owens' came from. He'd go down to Hervey Bay fishing and he'd talk about fishing. He would hardly ever talk about cricket...I just let him talk. His sight was going. We couldn't sit out in the sun for too long. He had sores on his face and you could see where there were sores. Every time I'd go to see him I'd be angry that he was there -- angry that with a couple of needles he'd be fixed -- but they didn't do that.\[90\]

Hospital reports from this time indicate that he had not improved mentally, but physically his
condition was fine. It was stated that he had "a large amount of brain damage which is
irreversible and that this was the result of a very old infection whose damage has now been
arrested."\[91\]

In February 1971 Gilbert was observed with ulceration of the lower lip, possibly caused
by his heavy smoking. He underwent surgery at Royal Brisbane Hospital to treat extensive
hyperkeratosis on his lower lip. This healed well.\[92\]

Soon afterwards he received a transfer from his ward (M 4).\[93\] In June it was noted that
he had not at that particular time taken his usual Largactil syrup (sedative) despite the efforts of

---

\[88\] Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit., 1 December 1970.

\[89\] ibid. The father of Henry Collins was Cherbourg inmate Jimmy Edwards.

\[90\] Henry Collins, personal interview, op.cit.

\[91\] Eddie Gilbert, personal file information, op.cit.

\[92\] Eddie Gilbert, clinical file, op.cit., 8 February 1971.

\[93\] ibid., 19 March 1971.
staff to administer it in different ways but "He appears all right most of the time."  

In January 1972 Gilbert had a regular X-ray.

The right middle lobe is contracted. There is pleural thickening in the left base and fibrosis in the mid-left zone. The appearance would be consistent with bronchiecasis.\

A report from Wolston Park Hospital (previously Goodna Mental Hospital) from March 1972 suggested that Gilbert was incapable of making a statement. A medical examination in May 1972 found that his "vocal cords are almost non-existent which could account for poor quality of voice." Over the next few months he wandered off several times and it was proposed to eventually send him back to his old ward (M 4). On one occasion he "Strayed away from ward and was found with his clothes off about to go for a swim in the dam at 11.55 a.m. while group nurse was helping to serve out the Dinner."  

In 1972 The Cricketer (International) magazine printed an article by David Frith about Eddie Gilbert called: 'The Oblivion of Eddie Gilbert.' Despite a different explanation in his article Frith had apparently used a family connection to visit Goodna and speak to and photograph a frail looking, white-haired Eddie. He found that Gilbert was "unable or pathologically unwilling to communicate."  

---

94 ibid., 2 June 1971.  
95 ibid., clinical record.  
96 Eddie Gilbert, personal file, op.cit.  
98 ibid., 1972. On 9 February he had been returned from the vicinity of the nearby Wacol prison.  
The Queensland aboriginal cricketer Eddie Gilbert, famed for his bursts of express bowling during the 1930's, had not been heard of for so long that I took it upon myself in Brisbane to track him down.

An old-timer in the suburb of Red Hill where Eddie was last seen, thought he had died about five years before. We checked in the general store run by a cricket fan of some sixty summers:

'T'd just about swear to it. Old Eddie went right out of circulation and we never heard nothin' of him for ages. I reckon he must've died ten years back at least. They had him in Goodna for a while.'

I drove out to the psychiatric hospital along the Ipswich Road in the hope of establishing the truth of the matter. The superintendent barely concealing his surprise at my questions, led me through to the records office, where he produced Eddie Gilbert’s hospital history card.

'Eddie was admitted on December 8th, 1949. His age was shown as 37.'

I thought he would have been slightly older than that; perhaps the paperwork was completed hastily that sad day.

So long ago. Now here was I seeking to trace the conclusion of a life story. The superintendent glanced up from the history card.

'He was married at the time he came here. Nobody's visited him for ages. He used to be violent occasionally, but he's all right now - no trouble. But he's bottled right up within himself. You won't get him to talk. We've tried everything. He'll never change. Just as well perhaps. If he went again he'd be back among the plonkies down at the Adelaide in no time.'

'You're telling me he's here - alive?'

He nodded. 'As I say, he's completely withdrawn. It's impossible to get through to him. He walks the grounds all day - he's content in his own private world. We've tried to interest him in some kind of recreation: his reflexes are still sharp. But when we put a cricket ball in his hand he just stared at it.'

It came as a shock. Eddie - still ticking after all! Even the locals had seemed so certain. I had fallen into line with them and quietly and briefly mourned their popular hero of long ago, the fast bowler to whom they had bellowed encouragement to 'give Jardine a taste of his own bodyline medicine.'

I pressed him. I had to see the historic cricketer.

He picked up the phone and asked the attendant at the appropriate wing to 'find Eddie.'
We walked across the sunlit lawns, past slumbering patients, small-talk lost in the insistent buzz of insects. The coolness in the outer block was a relief. Eddie was some time in coming. Sitting in the office, I scanned the grounds through the open window. Suddenly a male nurse was standing at the door, and behind him, reluctant to advance, was a thin man in maroon T-shirt and black shorts. His hair was white and close-cropped, his skin glistening ebony. It was unmistakably Gilbert.

He shuffled into the room, head to one side, eyes averted, impossible to meet. His physique would have been insignificant beside Tom Richardson, Miller or Trueman, yet he was not the midget legends had depicted. Five feet eight, with long arms: the devastating catapult machine he must once have been was apparent.

'Shake hands, Eddie,' his attendant urged kindly.

The hand that had propelled the ball that had smashed so many stumps was raised slowly; it was as limp as a dislodged ball. He was muttering huskily and incoherently, gently rocking his head side to side.

'Want a fag, Eddie?' the nurse asked softly.

Eddie grunted, watched the cigarette begin to smoulder, and puffed at it. His legs, typically of his race, were thin. He turned on them restlessly. He was an outdoor man; a room was a cage.

When I asked the nurse if Eddie could write his name for me he coaxed him to pick up the ball-point.

At the end of an agonising minute Eddie backed away, leaving only a tortured 'E' on the paper. His squinting eyes, deepset and bloodshot, flashed briefly across all of us.

I thought then of what Archie Jackson, Australia's batting genius, had written about him in 1933: 'The adulation he has received has not affected his mental equilibrium. Such a player is an ornament to the game; may he continue to prosper!'

Eddie walked off, still breathing his wheezy monotone; he wandered through the meal hall, and the last I saw of him was as he drifted, a desolate individual, across the parched grass.  

This quote poignantly depicts the pathos of Eddie Gilbert's story. It brings out the fascination and lasting awe associated with Gilbert and also captures the frustration of an unfilled opportunity by the writer to gain a first-hand account from the 'living' legend. Sadly though Gilbert was only

---

able to offer a weak physical presence which contrasted with some of his cricketing performances.

Some unsubstantiated information indicates that Bill Hunt, the former New South Wales bowler, and an old ‘antagonist’ of Eddie Gilbert, visited him at Wolston Park at one time and found that "Gilbert remembered nothing and gave no reaction when a cricket ball was placed in his hand."\textsuperscript{102}

A report made on the 6th of December 1972 was to state:

No problem re management except is inclined to wander. May need to be placed in M 4 eventually. Often mutters to himself - unintelligibly. Hasn’t spoken for years. Periodically he wanders slowly away from the ward. Can become violent at times to a minor degree. Was very violent several years ago.

CNS Pupils fixed.
(Bilateral cataracts)
No reaction to light or accommodation.
No other cranial abnormalities detected.
CVS H.S. clear
BP 120/80
Chest clear.\textsuperscript{103}

By 1970 Gilbert had begun to suffer from episodes of pneumonia and he "gradually deteriorated from that time."\textsuperscript{104} During December 1972, Gilbert was brought in from the yard in a state of collapse and was diagnosed with bronchitis and pneumonia. He recovered but then suffered a relapse. His health had not been good for some time and he had bilateral cataracts. After one bout of sickness he was reported to be looking better and eating well. The day after this entry he "got himself up and came to lunch."\textsuperscript{105}


\textsuperscript{103} Eddie Gilbert, clinical file, op.cit., 6 December 1972.

\textsuperscript{104} ibid., Autopsy report, 1978.

\textsuperscript{105} ibid., 25 December 1972, 2 and 4 January 1973.
In early February 1973 he absconded from the institution and was "Picked up at Wacol by Police later in the day" in the vicinity of the nearby Wacol Prison.\textsuperscript{106} Over the next few months he periodically became more restless. On the 10th May he was "Brought back from Picnic Grounds. Noticed by Staff to be unsteady on feet."\textsuperscript{107}

During June a request was made by a Mr. Mike Williams on behalf of the Aboriginal organisation OPAL to interview Eddie Gilbert for a series on \textit{Famous Australians}. He was "advised that Eddie would not be physically able to take part in any interview, owing to his illness."\textsuperscript{108}

A report from October 1973 noted that Eddie Gilbert was: "Occasionally aggressive if provoked or hurried."\textsuperscript{109}

Various newspaper articles over the years were to reflect on his exploits from the 1930s and focus on some aspects of his career. The interest and intrigue in him prevailed. For example, in 1973 \textit{The Sunday-Mail} (Brisbane) conducted a competition to identify a photograph of an early sports identity who, in this case, was Eddie Gilbert. Over 6000 people, an exceptionally high number of entries for this type of competition, entered for the modest prize of a number of $2 casket tickets.\textsuperscript{110}

It was observed in April 1974 that Eddie "had problem coming down Stairway as though Eyesight was impaired."\textsuperscript{111} A short time later he was found to have "some visual

\textsuperscript{106} ibid., 12 February 1973. Prior to this he had been found at Wacol Railway Station on 29 November 1972. The \textit{Search and Rescue Information} form filled out on him after one attempt to abscond mentioned: "Aboriginal Race. Scars L Arm R Leg Knee Shoulder."

\textsuperscript{107} ibid., 10 May 1973.

\textsuperscript{108} ibid., 26 June 1973.

\textsuperscript{109} ibid., 12 October 1973.

\textsuperscript{110} \textit{The Sunday-Mail} (Brisbane), 22 July 1973.

\textsuperscript{111} Eddie Gilbert, clinical file, \textit{op.cit.}, 13 April 1974.
deterioration." Soon afterwards his sight began to fail badly.

In March 1975 he had a chronic ulcer on his right leg but the cause of this as it might relate to his diagnosed condition was not stated. During April he was interviewed by social workers of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Legal service. In the same month Eddie slipped over in the bathroom and cut the back of his head but was "Too frightened to keep still for suturing." Later in the year he became ill again with one of his now fairly frequent bouts of bronchitis. He was also reported to be continually hallucinating. After recovering from one bout of illness it was recorded that "he eats sweets willingly."

In July his mental state was listed as being "quite demented" and he was restless and difficult to examine. On the 7th of August he suffered a Grand Mal (epileptic) fit.

A 1976 feature article, by Kevin Kelly, on Eddie Gilbert, appeared in The Courier-Mail (Brisbane). In the article he pointed out that, "The aborigine in those times was held in no greater regard in certain quarters than he is today, and Gilbert had to endure undisguised racial prejudice." The article went on to indicate that Gilbert "is spending his declining years in an institution, an almost forgotten man."

---

112 ibid.
113 ibid., 18 March 1975.
114 ibid., 15 April 1976. His weight at the time was recorded as 59.1kg.
115 ibid., 2 October 1975.
116 ibid., 3 October 1975.
117 ibid., 1 July 1976.
118 ibid., 8 August 1976.
120 ibid.
The clinical notes from the 7th February 1977, show that his condition was much the same; he was blind, did not require any regular medication, and had "an occasional grand mal fit."121 "Generally has become less active over last 2-3 years. Used to need as much as 200 mgms Chlorpromazine QID for constant aggression."122

Contrary to this report he displayed some aggression over the next few months but by June was again: "No longer actively aggressive. Cannot be hurried re doing anything is blind."123 He only mumbled.

Records of visitors were kept in the wards but these have long since disappeared and no indication of visitors is available. The only known visitors or intending visitors are those who have written to the Department of Native Affairs or to Wolston Park Hospital. Visitors could arrive at the appropriate time without appointment.

Gilbert probably received a number of visitors in his early years in the asylum, especially from old cricketing friends and people from his tribal grouping and family. Over the years, and no doubt influenced by his mental decline, the number of visitors dropped to a very occasional visit, mainly by relatives. The fact that he was at the Hospital was not widely realised by the general public. Even so his records do include a letter written by G.F... who suggested: "Where a white person may like BarBQ or Dancing I think eddie would like Billy Tea very sweet with Damper and Butter or honey."124

122 ibid.
123 ibid., 22 June 1977.
124 ibid., correspondence file.
Some people remember visiting Eddie, mainly in the late 1960s or early 1970s. A niece through marriage, May McBride, recalled visiting Eddie:

My husband and I went and visited him at Goodna and I said, "Do you know me Uncle Eddie?" He said, "Yes, Yes, Yes," he talked very quickly like that, "You're May Ross, you're May Ross." He didn't know me as May McBride, my married name.

The people I went to work with in Gympie, Barnes', well one of their sons, Jim Barnes, was a wardsman at Goodna and he told me that Uncle Eddie had become violent. How, I don't know, but that's what he told me.

When we visited he was all right, quiet as usual and he just went about very quietly and spoke to me like that. Those sort of quiet fellows get their temper up and they can be violent.125

May's daughter, Linda, also remembered:

I remember I went out with you and Dad. I was sitting in the car and that's the vaguest memory I have of actually seeing him. He was shuffling on one spot and kind of moving his hands as if he was with a ball, like you throw a ball from one hand to another and kind of shuffling on the spot -- but that's the only thing I remember of him.126

Another Cherbourg resident, Nellie Sheridan, when visiting another patient, remembered seeing Eddie:

We used to go and see Eddie but we wasn't allowed to go into his place -- where the compound was. We used to talk through the fence -- he must have been that bad but he didn't know anyone. Didn't even know his own sister -- he had, I think a step-sister or something.127

The reference to a step-sister refers to Effie Arnold (Collins), who was a half-sister. A couple of people from Cherbourg, who very vaguely remember an 'adopted' child128 that Eddie had, probably meant the girl Barbara (or Bebrillie) his wife Edie apparently had, or Eddie's son, Eddie Barney.

---

127 Nellie Sheridan, personal interview, April 1988.
128 Sue Ackerly, personal information, confidential, February 1989.
Livingstone Chambers, in commenting on people who had visited Gilbert, supported the comments of Nellie Sheridan when he suggested that "he wouldn’t talk to people from here. He sort of went out of his mind." However, a different picture was given by another visitor, Les Stewart, who indicated that Gilbert spoke to them and knew them. "Do you know who we are Eddie?" "Oh, yeah." And he’d say their name...pleased to see them."

It is apparent that many people did not know or understand the reason why Eddie was in hospital. Some even attributed it to the result of treatment he had received from the "cricket boards and selectors."

A woman sent him silly after taking all that he had or he could have been given ‘something’ so as to appear to be silly then put into Wacol. He may have just had a nervous breakdown.

Other ‘causes’ ranged from bereavement, and his drinking problem, through to a bone-pointing incident. Olga Chambers was not sure that it was true but indicated that Gilbert had told her before he was sent to the Mental Hospital that "someone had boned him." Such an explanation fuels the fascination that many have for this traditional Aboriginal punishment. For example, The Telegraph (Brisbane), in August 1935, under the heading, ‘GOVERNMENT’S WORK - Eradicating Old Superstitions,’ had reported:

Quite recently there was an example of this awesome procedure when a strongly-built, athletic young aborigine passed into decline and died as a result of the witch doctor’s attentions. Eddie Gilbert, the State’s Aboriginal fast bowler, was one of the pall-bearers at his funeral.

129 Livingstone Chambers, personal interview, op.cit.
130 Les Stewart, personal interview, op.cit.
132 ibid.
134 The Telegraph (Brisbane), 19 August 1935: 4.
The ‘pointing the bone’ explanation was rejected outright by former Cherbourg resident Vince Bunda. He stated that Eddie Gilbert "did not believe in the old tribal ways and practices and he would not have himself have been affected by these."\textsuperscript{135} Gilbert was not worried by the taboos that worried other people and he had no problems going down to the morgue, dressing corpses and so on which were part of his job when he worked as a wardsman at the settlement Hospital. "He wasn’t affected by this at all and if he had had a bone pointed at him it wouldn’t worry him."\textsuperscript{136} In view of the condition that Gilbert suffered from it is highly likely that he may have made his bone-pointing comments when he was in a delusional state.

A former Aboriginal social worker, Paddy Jerome, recalled, with bitterness, his impressions and experiences when he visited Gilbert:

There were times I had to go out to Wolston Park – now this has mystified me about Eddie -- like when I’d go over to him he’d talk to me rationally, about the old days,...He’d go on for ‘hours’ in an intelligent conversation...What are you doing here, in this mad house? He was in this for over twenty years.

One day I happen to come from the other direction and I seen him playing acting - acting out the role of a bloody idiot. He was in there that long that he felt that he had to play the part to fit into that environment, but as I said before there was nothing wrong because we’d sit down and we’d discuss – talk and laugh and joke and talk about so and so...they kept him in that rat house.

When they put Eddie in there because he got drunk or something...[he] would have sobered up in two hours. Anyway he ended up in a mental institution and because he had different ideas than the people who assess him they said he was insane and over a period of time he got conditioned to play the part of a bloody lunatic.\textsuperscript{137}

When his condition is considered it is possible that Gilbert, after some time of garbling words or sounding nonsensical, may suddenly, though temporarily, have a lucid interval and carry on a conversation which appeared to be normal. This would explain the different interpretations about

---

\textsuperscript{135} Vince Bunda, personal interview, op.cit.

\textsuperscript{136} ibid.

\textsuperscript{137} Paddy Jerome, personal interview, February 1988.
how he would receive visitors. Sometimes he would recognise people, especially Aboriginal people, and at other times he would be completely blank.

During 1977 there was to be little change in Eddie's physical or mental state. On the 8th January 1978, Eddie was thought to be less steady on his feet and was falling to his left side. As a result of his behaviour this blind, demented, frail Aboriginal man was confined to bed where his condition deteriorated further. During a nursing inspection at 8.00 a.m. the next morning Eddie would not take any nourishment and again at 9.30 a.m. he refused a milk drink. At around 10.00 a.m. the 'tortured' body of Eddie Gilbert took a final breath of air then gave up the struggle for life. During a check on his condition at 10.30 a.m. his lifeless form was found.

In a report, presumably by a doctor (Burns), it was clinically stated:

Most probably had Cerebro Vascular Thrombosis. In view of past history of Cerebral Syphilis I consider that a Post Mortem Exam'n would be desirable.

The Oxley Police were notified at 10.50 a.m. and arrived at 11.00 a.m. A Minister was also called and performed the last Rites at 11.15 a.m.. The body was removed by Coroner's undertaker at 12.35 a.m.

---

139 ibid., 8 January 1978.
140 ibid., 9 January 1978.
141 ibid.
142 ibid.
The 9th of January 1978, late edition of *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), carried the news that the life of Eddie Gilbert had ended.

**Cricket’s Eddie Gilbert dead.**

Former Sheffield Shield fast bowler Eddie Gilbert, the first Aboriginal cricketer to represent Queensland, died to-day at Wolston Park hospital, aged 69.

Gilbert, who played the first of his 19 Sheffield Shield matches for Queensland in 1931-32 is best remembered for his feat of dismissing Sir Donald Bradman for a duck at the Gabba in 1931.

Contrary to legend, Gilbert did not clean bowl the champion Test batsman, but had him caught by Len Waterman.

Apart from his Shield appearances, he also played for Queensland against the West Indies, South Africa and England and in his time was easily the fastest bowler in Australia.

He did however possess a suspect bowling action and the controversy surrounding it reached such a pitch that umpires even studied films of Gilbert bowling.

Gilbert’s Shield bowling figures read; 514.7 overs, 41 maidens, 2172 runs, 73 wickets at an average of 29.75.

Gilbert died of natural causes. No funeral details have yet been made.143

---

143 *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 9 January 1978: 1.

---
A post-mortem examination was conducted on the 10th January at the Institute of Forensic Pathology, at Brisbane General Hospital. Samples were taken and Dr. R.A. Cooke later completed an Autopsy report.

Information on the post-mortem report stated:

The body was that of an elderly aboriginal male. There was no external evidence of injury.

The dura and meninges were normal. The cerebrospinal fluid was clear. The cerebral fluid was clear. The brain was atrophic. The cerebral vessels were mildly atheromatous. The brain was fixed.

The larynx, trachea and major bronchi were normal. There were scattered pleural fibrous adhesions. The lungs were congested and slightly emphysematous with a moderate degree of carbon pigmentation. No other abnormality was noted.

The pericardium and pericardial cavity were normal. The cardiac valves and chambers appeared normal. The myocardium appeared normal. There was mild atheroma of the coronary arteries. There was moderate atherosclerosis of the thoracic aorta and severe atherosclerosis of the abdominal aorta with an early thrombosed aneurysm [sic] just proximal to the bifurcation. There was thrombus extending from the origins of the renal arteries along the aorta to the common iliac arteries.

The mouth, oesophagus and stomach were normal. The small intestine and the transverse colon were congested. The liver, biliary tree and pancreas were normal.

The spleen was normal. No abnormal lymph nodes were found. The pituitary, thyroid and adrenals were normal.

The renal capsules stripped with difficulty to reveal finely granular cortical surfaces. The ureters and bladder were normal.\(^{144}\)

The next section of the post-mortem report consisted of information taken from the autopsy report.

MACROSCOPIC DESCRIPTION OF THE BRAIN

The brain weighed 1020. The leptomeninges were thin and transparent. There was generalised atrophy over both hemispheres. The vessels all appeared normal and showed minimal atheroma. Cut slices of the brain showed no localised abnormality apart from the gyral atrophy which was present in all portions of the brain. There was also a mild degree of internal hydrocephalus. The cerebellum and brain stem appeared normal. There was no atrophy of the caudate nucleus or basal ganglia. Sections were taken from all areas of the brain.

HISTOLOGY:

There was a marked loss neurones with shrinkage and distortion of most of the remaining neurones. This was associated with a moderate degree of gliosis. Von Braunmuh stain showed numerous fibrillary plaques and a few neurones showed the neurofibrillary change. The leptomeninges showed no evidence of inflammation.

SUMMARY

These appearances are consistent with the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease. (Professor Byron Kakulas from the University of Western Australia examined the sections and agreed with this diagnosis.)  

The final section of the post-mortem report suggests:

HISTOLOGY REPORT.

Heart: Moderate coronary atherosclerosis and some myocardial fibrosis.

Aorta: Atherosclerosis.

Liver: Congestion and some centriflobular necrosis.  

Taken together these two documents open up a great deal of conjecture about the initial diagnosis of G.P.I. and subsequent treatment of Gilbert during his years at Wolston Park Hospital. They clearly show that it was not the effects of cerebral syphilis (tertiary or neurosyphilis) that led to Eddie Gilbert’s mental decline and death.


Over the years Eddie suffered a progressive and irreversible mental decline which had many of the symptoms that are typical of neurosyphilis. If syphilis is not arrested within a reasonable period of time after it develops it may produce permanent atrophic changes in the brain with a varying degree of dementia which may be progressive and irreversible. Infections such as syphilis can be a factor in dementia and it has been suggested that, "Chronic organic brain syndromes result from relatively permanent, usually irreversible, diffuse impairment of cerebral tissue function." This dementia may result even when the infection has been controlled and has not progressed to cause general brain dysfunction. A non-specific dementia causing a mental decline may have the observed characteristic signs of neurosyphilis even though blood and cerebrospinal fluid tests might be negative. It is possible then to have a psychosis without a disease of the brain being evident. Gilbert’s treatment controlled the syphilis but not his mental decline. The damage usually caused by this disease was not clearly evidenced in the post-mortem although syphilis would appear to have been the initial cause of his progressive decline.

In regard to the difficulties of making definitive statements about various cases of dementia it has been said:

The differentiation of dementias due to specific and identifiable cerebral disease from those that arise in association with primary, idiopathic degenerative disease is one of the most important judgements to be made in the diagnosis of mental disorder in late and middle life. The commonest form of "secondary" dementia is, of course, that due to multiple infarcts. The Alzheimer’s disease brain damage that was described in the post-mortem examination was not that of typical Alzheimer’s disease but Gilbert had certain features of this condition. Alzheimer’s disease manifested itself in the final stages of Gilbert’s mental deterioration and was not something which would have been evident for the 29 years he spent at the Hospital. There is no characteristic pattern in either the intellectual impairment or the behavioural disturbances for

---

147 Kolb., op.cit., 135.

148 Mortimer, op.cit., 34.
Alzheimer's disease.

In advanced stages of the disease, speech becomes an incoherent jargon without sentence formation. Prolonged periods of restless overactivity, anxiety, and depression may occur. Agnosia, apraxia, and temporary hemiplegic or paraplegic weakness may exist. Syncopal and epileptic attacks are common. A Parkinson-like difficulty in gait is often seen. Facial paresis and hypertonicity of muscles are frequent, and in late stages there may be contractures of the extremities. At this stage the patient becomes extremely demented, is entirely out of touch with his environment, and becomes reduced to a mere vegetative existence. The usual duration of the disease is five to ten years, but the course may be characterized by remissions.\(^\text{149}\)

On the same day that the post-mortem was performed The Courier-Mail (Brisbane) reported that the funeral arrangements were not yet completed.\(^\text{150}\) The next day these completed arrangements were outlined:

**GILBERT, Edward (Eddie) late Cherbourg.**

The Relatives and Friends of the late Eddie Gilbert are respectfully invited to attend his funeral Service which is appointed to be held at the Cherbourg community, via Murgon, tomorrow (Thursday) commencing at 3 p.m.

**GEO HARTNETT A.F.D.A.**\(^\text{151}\)

The South Burnett Times briefly announced the news of Gilbert's death under the heading of, 'Legend dies,' and pointed out that he was "the only representative from the Murgon Shire to play for Queensland."\(^\text{152}\) During the career of Gilbert this paper had reprinted articles from the Brisbane papers and supported the 'South Burnett boy' during the controversies of his career.\(^\text{153}\)


\(^{150}\) ibid., 10 January 1978: 3. Arrangements were made by Henry Collins.

\(^{151}\) The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 11 January, 1978.

\(^{152}\) The South Burnett Times, 18 January 1978: 2.

\(^{153}\) The South Burnett Times, 9 January 1931; 16 January 1931; 30 January 1931; 13 November 1931; 20 November 1931; 25 December 1931; 20 January 1933; 27 January 1933; 17 March 1933; 22 December 1933; 4 October 1935; 10 January 1936; 7 October 1938. - **Bowling action.**

The South Burnett Times, 30 January 1931; 25 September 1931; 2 October 1931; 20 January 1933; 22 December 1933; 10 January 1936. - **Coverage of career.**
The body of Edward ('Eddie') Gilbert was transferred to Cherbourg by rail and he was buried at Cherbourg Cemetery on the 12th of January 1978, following a service at the Community Centre. The service was conducted by Mr. A. Powell of the Australian Inland Mission. Murgon resident, Doug Goodchild, went to the funeral.

He had a normal burial. The Shire chairman from here and myself and two or three other sportsmen who knew him went to the funeral. There was a good crowd - Aboriginals from out there. Quite a lot attended his funeral.154

Some reports have suggested that Don Bradman attended but this was not the case.155 The Queensland Cricket Association sent a wreath and gave assistance of $325 to cover the costs of his funeral.

At the time of Gilbert's death the relevant Government Department made attempts to contact his son, Eddie Bamey. Eddie jnr., who had never visited his father at Wolston, did not attend the funeral.

I was away up north at the time when I got word that he passed away at Wolston, apparently from too much alcohol and there was brain damage. I don't know what the story is there.156

The Cherbourg Cemetery register indicates that Eddie Gilbert was buried in Grave No. 217. There is no headstone on his grave because "not too many do that up here."157 The usual practice at the Cherbourg Cemetery is for the grave to have a simple white painted wooden cross with a metal grave number attached. Sometimes the name of the person is painted or written on the cross-piece but the crosses are not particularly sturdy and often fall down after a number of years. Such is the case with the grave marker for Eddie Gilbert, and to-day no indication, other than a general area of the cemetery, can be found of his last resting place.

154 Doug Goodchild, personal interview, April 1990.
155 Sir Donald Bradman, personal correspondence, February 1990.
156 Eddie Bamey, personal interview, op.cit.
157 Livingstone Chambers, personal interview, op.cit.
The death certificate issued for Edward Gilbert has a number of incorrect or incomplete details about him which are not supported by other evidence. For example, his age was given as 65 (instead of 74) and it was indicated that he had married when he was 32 years old although he had married much earlier than this. The certificate was certified by a nephew, R. Arnold.158

The certificate listed the cause of his death as Alzheimer’s disease. Although Alzheimer’s disease was a contributing factor, the actual cause of death was most likely a cardiac arrest due to general circulatory disease and perhaps partly attributable to an amount of degenerative brain functioning he suffered.

Postscript

Eddie Gilbert was a product and victim of his Aboriginal heritage, background and pressures that persisted throughout his life. There have been many things written about Eddie Gilbert, much of it fanciful, controversial, or untrue. Many theories and explanations have been made about his life. Much of the analysis undertaken makes it easy to lose sight of the ‘real’ Eddie Gilbert.

During his first-class cricket career Eddie Gilbert proved to be well-known to white Australians. He had a popularity and degree of acceptability which was able to cut across racial lines.159 He was not considered black as such, he was somehow a ‘different’ or special black.

158 Eddie Gilbert, death certificate extract, number 87617.

159 He was what is now referred to as a ‘cross-over.’ A cross-over is a minority figure whose popularity cuts across racial bounds. Many years before the career of Eddie Gilbert Australia had its ‘cross-overs’ in the likes of the great West Indian boxer Peter Jackson, runner Charlie Samuels and boxer Jerry Jerome. Before the turn of this century Peter Jackson was one of the best boxers that ever came to Australia.

When Peter Jackson died, the whole athletic world of Australia unanimously mourned over his grave, and testified to his sterling qualities and stainless reputation. It was one of the healthiest lessons ever taught Australian youth. It was a recognition of the brave man, regardless of his color [sic], creed, or country.

(Photocopy article on Jack Dowridge, source unknown).
As a result of severe restrictions imposed on the life of Aborigines under the operation of
the reserve system during the 1930s and because of the deeply entrenched racism in white society,
Gilbert proved to be a ‘pioneer.’ Even so he has been accused of contributing little to the
advancement of the Aboriginal cause by his first-class cricket career. To attain a role as a sports
folk hero he was depicted in a way which denied him the opportunity to speak out for his people.
However, in some respects his admiration by a sizeable group in white society was, in itself, a
contribution to Aboriginal advancement.

His career had little real or lasting effect in improving race relations between white society
and the wider Aboriginal community of Australia. However, it did have some impact on the
willingness of white people to recognise sporting talent, irregardless of colour. White people
were able to recognise his abilities and be entertained by his performances in cricket without
necessarily changing their prejudices in other areas. Such was his level of acceptance that it was
even possible for white people to admit, in certain circumstances, to having a good relationship
with Gilbert and not be subjected to the ridicule of others. To claim an involvement with him
was seen as an expression of that person’s kind-heartedness and unselfish efforts to help an
unfortunate to succeed.

The controversial nature of Gilbert’s career made him even more mysterious, exciting and
appealing. Although he was never ‘accepted’ by many white people, he was to be a distinctive
character who attracted a great deal of attention. Young people, in particular, proved to be
‘colour-blind’ in terms of accepting him as a cricket hero. In addition to breaking down racial
barriers, Eddie Gilbert also enjoyed a popularity which had the unique effect of crossing not only
the generation gap in Australian society but the gender gap as well. His career was keenly
followed by young and old and by persons of both sexes. Unfortunately, Gilbert was not able to
convert his multi-racial popularity into social mobility or anything more financially rewarding than
goodwill.
On the cricket field Gilbert was the epitome of sportsmanship, grace, unpredictibility, unorthodoxy, and exhilarating speed. He was friendly, cheerful, well-mannered and respectful. Off the field he was carefully depicted as reflecting family values and wholesome living practices. The papers often carried close-up photographs of a happy, often smiling and, dare to say, handsome Eddie Gilbert.

Alan McGilvray, the highly regarded cricket commentator, played against Gilbert and recalled:

Although I played against him several times I really did not know him for he was a very quiet person, rarely talked and when he did it was invariably short. He appeared to me to be very shy.160

McGilvray was to give a good description of Gilbert as a cricketer in his book, McGilvray: And the Game Goes On.

But I have absolutely no doubt as to who was the fastest bowler I ever saw, as distinct from the best. He stood less than 5 feet 8 inches tall and weighed about nine stone, and by the athletic standards of today he was outright puny. But he came at you with a blinding flash of arm and hand that let the ball go like a bullet, and to play against him was to know real fear. His name was Eddie Gilbert. He was an Aboriginal who lived at the Barambah Aboriginal settlement, and in the four or five years he played for Queensland, he won himself a reputation to make him a legend in his own time.

Eddie Gilbert won immortality of a sort for dismissing Don Bradman for a duck in a Shield game in Brisbane. In fact, he had 2-0 before the New South Wales innings was very old that year, capturing Wendell Bill for a duck also in a spell that has been written into cricketing folklore. Eddie didn’t do things by the book. It is hard to tell whether he actually chucked or not, because he let the ball go with such a fling of his right arm you got precious little sight of it. But certainly there was suspicion. He took a very short run for a start, and his contemporaries could never work out how he could generate such pace from so short a run without some sort of leverage from a bent arm, suddenly straightened. He was no-balled quite a few times in his career, but whether he threw or not, he certainly came at you quickly, and to face him was to know you had to be very certain of what you were doing to remain in one piece.161

160 Alan McGilvray, personal correspondence, February 1990.

Gilbert was a player in the ‘Bradman’ era of cricket. According to Geoff Armstrong in his book, *A Century of Summers: 100 Years of Sheffield Shield Cricket*, "He is recalled by some, unfairly, as no more than the man who threw at Bradman." Gilbert and Bradman had their ‘battles’ and perhaps the comments by Don Bradman in his autobiography, *Farewell to Cricket*, are worth recalling:

The fastest bowling I ever faced for a few overs was by the Queensland aboriginal Eddie Gilbert, though one would not dream of classing him amongst the great. Moreover, his action was decidedly suspect.

On that day in Queensland we struck a green-top wicket. Whilst Gilbert was fresh he hurled them down like thunderbolts.

At the start of my brief innings one ball knocked the bat completely out of my hands, the only time I ever had such an experience.

I was eventually caught by the wicket-keeper who was standing almost half-way between the stumps and the boundary. He took the ball over his head.

Since his death it could be argued that the legend of Eddie Gilbert has grown beyond what it was during his life. As with any legendary figure, reality and myth become intertwined. Certainly, the focussing on some aspects of his career has largely ignored the significant overall contribution that Gilbert made towards Queensland cricket. Don Bradman, as a result of his batting performances, became a national hero. A comparison between the cricketing achievements of Bradman and Gilbert is a poor one indeed but in the same way that Bradman became part of the lives and memories of a great many Australians during the early thirties, so it was to be with Gilbert. Eddie Gilbert, partly because of the fact that he was an Aborigine, but also because of

---

There seems little doubt he did throw his quickest ball, but most of the time he was probably more than extremely loose limbed, and a fine and unique fast bowler. But for one over at the mighty Bradman, he might have been remembered just as that.

163 Don Bradman. *Farewell to Cricket*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1950: 288. According to Bradman, Tim Wall was the finest fast bowler he faced when the ball was new.
his achievements and the controversies that became associated with his career, proved to be of
great interest not only in Queensland but throughout Australia. During his career he won wide
appreciation for his special talents but later he suffered a tragic decline.

Both Gilbert and Bradman were, therefore, central figures in the ‘psyche’ of people of
their time, and as such, and for different reasons, and in their own ways, became part of the daily
conversation of many people. In support of this comment, Kelly, in an article which appeared in
The Courier-Mail (Brisbane) before the death of Gilbert, wrote: “For my part it’s a case of
thanks, Eddie, for a precious memory; my generation will never forget you.”164 This point is
further supported by the comment included in the book, Over the top with Jim, by Hugh Lunn.
In this story, based on his experiences in the late fifties and early sixties in Brisbane, Lunn was to
recall his grandmother’s words when

...she often said that Queensland had missed a chance to win the Sheffield Shield
because someone down south had ‘drawn the colour bar’—whatever that meant
against our black fast bowler Eddie Gilbert.165

One source of information has suggested that a large photograph of Gilbert’s dismissal of
Bradman was, for many years, displayed on the wall at Robinson’s Sports Store in Queen Street,
Brisbane. In the early 1970s the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) produced a
documentary about Gilbert as part of a series on ‘Famous Australians.’ In more recent times
feature and short articles as well as the occasional ‘Letter to the Editor’ mentioning Eddie Gilbert
have appeared in various newspapers.166 The Queensland Art Gallery own a diptych by
Aboriginal artist Ron Hurley entitled, ‘Bradman bowled Gilbert.’


Of more significance to Aboriginal people is the fact that generations of Cherbourg children have grown up with stories of a hero that they never met. Several of the older Cherbourg residents have photographs of Gilbert and remember him. He was a hero to the inmates on the settlement and although he had a level of acceptance in white society he remained the property of the Aboriginal 'underclass.' To these people the triumphs of 'our Eddie Gilbert' were their triumphs and with the "constant sense of inferiority engendered by the settlement regimen, Gilbert's achievements reassured them that their inferior status was undeserved." A few have proposed that a monument be built for Eddie Gilbert and lament the fact that the cricket pitch that he played on at the settlement was torn up and dumped. Even amongst these people his full story is poorly understood but this has not diminished a pride in his special achievements which has transcended the years.

Throughout his life and cricket career Eddie Gilbert retained a sense of pride in his identity as an Aboriginal Australian. His sporting achievements were part of an almost impossible dream for an Aborigine in the 1930s to play cricket for Australia. The fact that this did not occur does not diminish his achievements. A recounting of the Eddie Gilbert story can serve to point out the fullness of his career and is also important in more fully explaining what it was like to be an Aborigine in the white sporting world of the 1930s. There well may be significant lessons to be learned from his life and experiences. All Australians should recognise and understand the past contribution of Aborigines to Australian society and work together to develop a better relationship based on mutual respect.


168 Blake, op.cit., 340.

169 The Prime Minister of Australia (Paul Keating) has stated:
If we wish to truly claim to being a truly decent, civilised advanced nation, the arrogance, intolerance, ignorance and complacency which for so long characterised the attitudes and policies of White Australia has to go. The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 28 May 1992: 20.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The cricketing career of Eddie Gilbert and the information available about him provided the opportunity to gain a greater appreciation of the plight and life of detribalised Aborigines. These details allow for the examination of certain myths, inconsistencies and contradictions in a so-called ‘classless’ but nevertheless racist Australian society.

This final chapter will summarise the study and highlight points of special relevance. In outlining these it must be remembered that the experiences of Eddie Gilbert must be considered in relation to a particular context and cannot be generalised to other Aborigines.

Background.

Had white intervention in Australia not have taken place there is every possibility that the person we know as Eddie Gilbert would have lived a fairly happy and carefree tribal life in north Queensland, perhaps using any special skills he may have developed to help the tribe and gain a level of confidence, self-respect and self-importance. White intrusion significantly disrupted the way of life of the Aborigines. Gilbert's family was removed from its home area and kinship ties, to the land of another tribe. Eddie Gilbert was born away from the tribal land of his parents and was never to visit their land.

In stark contrast with these aspects were the powerful influences which took place in a settlement environment and resulted in a small boy being taken away from his family, and tribal influences, and through a white-dominated reserve system, set about to create an obedient and institutionally dependent individual who would develop few traditional Aboriginal beliefs and values and who had very limited freedom of any description. He was channelled into restricted vocational options which, more often than not, saw him in a subordinate and subservient role to whites. This reflected the dramatically changed role Aborigines had in ‘settled’ Australian society.

The reserve system, with its strict regulations, removals policy and values development, manipulated and controlled the lives of inmates and in return provided them with a place to live,
security, and some health care, shelter, food and clothing. The personal cost for the Aboriginal people was the loss of the often complex inter-relationships which occurred between the psychological, social, moral, religious, cultural and spiritual aspects which had been present in their lives. The segregation of the Aborigines on the settlement led to a particular type of group socialisation experiences which, although intended to prepare Aborigines for the white society, actually did no such thing. Despite the restrictions and controls at the settlement the remnants of the tribes at Cherbourg were able to survive and establish their own particular identity.

Various significant factors were to influence the life of Gilbert. These include; the socialising role of a reserve education system with its underlying assumptions about the limited capabilities of the inmates and its direction of these people towards restricted vocations; the role of white officials in transfers and removals; the almost forgotten isolation and control inherent in an institutionalised reserve system; the influence of a changing settlement culture; a dormitory and education system designed to destroy all aspects of a traditional Aboriginal culture; the prevailing racial attitudes (with their rejection of certain basic rights) of the white population and the modification made to these views to accommodate selected individuals; the Aboriginal and half-caste question; the effect of white officials on the life of Aborigines; the economic and political reality of settlement life; the effect of religious teaching; the extent of settlement gambling and cultural development; the distorted perceptions of white people about the standard of health care and nutrition offered to the inmates; and, the employment and control of Aborigines. It is remarkable that Aborigines were able to survive with dignity and pride.

Eddie Gilbert, like other inmates, shared a common experience but, because of certain aspects of his character, and the experiences that he was to have during his cricket career, he does not serve as a typical example of a person on the settlement. In spite of this he still provides an insight into how a self-conscious and almost withdrawn young man developed a skill that took him away from his ordered and controlled existence into the harsh, exciting, and at times
overwhelming reality of a white-dominated and basically racist society. His only protection from the normal pressures of such an experience was his involvement in cricket, the so-called arena of equality. However, involvement with sport at the first-class level was to expose him to many experiences and several hurtful comments and unfair controversies.

**Sport on the Settlement.**

Sport on the settlement at Cherbourg was a relevant and important activity for inmates, both as participants and spectators. At Cherbourg a great deal of the impetus to play cricket came from the Aborigines themselves, who were motivated by enjoyment of the activity. The enthusiasm and participation of the inmates were to exemplify many noble characteristics despite the obvious point that they were a down-trodden race of people. The various sporting activities undertaken served purposes for the inmates and were encouraged by the white authorities, for other reasons. For the inmates participation in sport represented an adaptation to traditional Aboriginal culture and with its social solidarity was able to unite the various tribal groups on the settlement.

Cricket provided the opportunity for social contact between white and black people. This contact did help to change some of the opinions that many local people had about Aborigines as a group and allowed them to see at least some individual Aborigines as talented and capable sportsmen in their own right. There was a real pride in representing the settlement and strong competition to do so. With their successes, came the additional bonus of showing that they could beat the white man at his own game.

Although cricket was the first sport played against teams off the settlement other sports were also played and in later years rugby league was to become the most popular sport at the settlement. The proceeds from matches played by the football team were to help support Gilbert during his cricketing career.
Level of Paternalism.

Paternalism towards Aborigines in Australian society remains rife and is the result of a way of thinking which suggests that Aborigines are not capable of looking after their own affairs. It is a narrow and unjust belief. The paternalistic attitude of white people towards Aborigines is well illustrated by an examination of Eddie Gilbert's life and career.

Eddie Gilbert was not able to make real choices about his cricket career, nor had he the freedom to act upon these choices. Between matches Gilbert returned home to his settlement and his cricketing successes brought him no personal autonomy and independence from white authority. He did have some privileges but he was expected to work and follow the regulations of the settlement, administered as they were by the white officials.

The two white people whom Gilbert respected and had most to do with (especially early in his career) were Robert Crawford and Len Allen. Gilbert enjoyed a good relationship with them. Both Allen and Crawford exhibited a good deal of benevolent paternalism in dealing with him even though there was no doubt there was mutual respect. Allen and Crawford, although not usually acting together, generally looked after his interests and 'helped' Gilbert make decisions (or made them for him). Some of these decisions may not always have been in his best interests. A great deal of paternalism was also exerted by the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Brisbane and Superintendent Semple at the settlement. An example of the unbelievable level of control and interference in Gilbert's life was when a telegram was sent to him by departmental officials requesting that he clean his clothes before playing in a cricket match against England in 1933.

Racial Discrimination.

Racial discrimination is a pervasive societal phenomenon in Australia. The segregation of Aborigines, as occurred with the inmates at Cherbourg, resulted in their exclusion from most aspects of the white-dominated society, including sport.

Racial hostility inside cricket at the first-class level was perhaps not anticipated by a fairly
naive Gilbert. Of his career Evans has suggested: "The constant slurs upon his bowling style - similar in nature to innuendos levelled against earlier Aboriginal cricketers, Jack Marsh and Albert Henry - borders closely upon a vituperative racist campaign."¹

Although the question of race was a significant factor that determined the course of the career of Eddie Gilbert there were many other issues. The comments by Ray Evans hint at a conspiracy against Gilbert but the study has shown that there are many exceptions to this opinion.

Sport has provided a legitimate opportunity for people to interact. In more recent times, sport has been applauded for its role in the integration of Aborigines into white Australian society, but in many cases the integration value of sport is a myth which overlooks the discrimination and prejudice which are evident in sport.

Even when Aborigines are encouraged to play sport, they are often exposed to conscious or unconscious acts of discrimination by those involved in sport. In some cases the only time these influences are diluted, or adulation given, is during competition. When these sportspersons leave the field and venture back into the wider society to interact in a non-sport situation they are usually exposed to the same prejudices and discrimination as any other Aborigine.

Interaction through sport, for some white people at least, was to modify only a few previously held prejudices. In Gilbert's case it was tempered somewhat and he enjoyed a surprising level of public acceptance, especially in Queensland. Because the success of the State cricket team was important to the white-dominated society Gilbert gained a level of popularity which was able to cut across racial barriers.

Some players in various State cricket teams gave him a 'difficult' time and some incidents reinforced this. A potentially destructive but much less obvious effect on Gilbert was the often subtle display of discrimination from people involved in cricket, invisible to the spectator.

Social Mobility.

Cricket did not prove to be an agent of social mobility and assimilation for Eddie Gilbert. Eddie Gilbert was to have his moment of fame and a limited amount of social acceptance - but this was to be a passing and temporary experience. The racial attitudes of white people would never allow Eddie to use his cricket success to climb the social ladder. As was a feature of sport at the time, participation in cricket forced Gilbert into debt.

The involvement of Aborigines in most social institutions during the 1930s was fairly restricted. Gilbert did not play cricket as a means of social acceptance in white society and certainly never seriously saw it as a means of escaping settlement life. For any Barambah inmate of the early 1930s, it was unbelievable that by excelling at sport, one would be able to escape the control of the ‘Act.’

He would have been acutely aware that once his career had finished, the highest a non-Aboriginal person could ever hope for would be to gain an exemption from the controls of the ‘Act’ and have a reasonably stable job off the settlement. The alternative was to return to the life and work on the settlement and attempt to establish himself in a ‘comfortable’ job. In a society that recognises wealth as a basis of power, the Aborigines were to be a powerless group of people, denied (at that time) even their culture.

In addition to the restrictions imposed by Government regulations, his level of education and his lack of exposure and acceptance in white society would have been affected by the common stereotypes and whites’ perception that Aborigines had a significantly different social and cultural background. Gilbert was talented at cricket but devoid of expertise in those areas that would allow him to gain any position of white socio-economic status and authority.

There was no special requirement necessary for success as a fast bowler. This allowed white people to preserve their stereotype notions about the intelligence and abilities of Aborigines. It would be fair to say that Gilbert was far more acceptable to the white public as a fast bowler
with its ‘wild,’ untamed trademark, than he would have been as a cool, calculating and skillful batsman. Because of the suggestion that a good batsman has more talent and ‘gentlemanly’ ways than a fast bowler any Aboriginal batsman would have had a mammoth task in being accepted or allowed to have a first-class career.

The real cost to Gilbert was the personal cost. When his career ended he was no longer ‘special’ and the fact that he had to go back to work must have been hard to accept. The evidence shows he was not inclined to return to this sort of living. In this regard he was not unlike many white sportsmen of the time.

**White People.**

Eddie Gilbert was encouraged to play cricket at the first-class level but there is some evidence that, quite apart from the benevolent paternalism already outlined, he was also exploited or cunningly manipulated by some white people. These people often had quite different views and beliefs to those of Gilbert. Most would have had little experience in dealing with Aborigines and could have harboured opinions about them in general which were in conflict with the way they treated or were expected to treat Gilbert. This group, which included fellow players, team officials and officials of the Q.C.A., as well as Department and settlement staff, more often than not, had the power and resources to manipulate Gilbert, to display open prejudice, or to cause him to undertake actions deemed to be in his best interests. For example, and as already mentioned, it can be strongly suggested that Gilbert was exploited by Superintendent Semple and the Chief Protector of Aboriginals for their own self-interest and favourable press.

He had no personal or financial independence. Many times he suffered uncomfortable experiences and may have wished to give up cricket but he would have felt obliged to continue. His path-finding role for the people at Barambah was tempered by the exploitation he endured at the hands of others.
Gilbert's daily life for the most part was controlled by the operation of the Aboriginals Protection Act. Even as an adult, his affairs were closely monitored by the white officials at Barambah. As a result of his cricket trips he was able to escape many of the provisions of the Act and this freedom undoubtedly affected his behaviour, his thinking and more significantly, his character and attitudes.

The role of the Q.C.A. and the State selectors was very difficult to follow at times. Occasionally they were very helpful and supportive of Gilbert but at other times confusing decisions and actions were made or taken. It is clear that although some financial and other assistance were given to Gilbert they also forced their will on him and manipulated him for their own, mainly financial, purposes. The Q.C.A. abruptly ended his career in November 1936, after an apparent loss of form during the Country Week carnival. There would be no further opportunities to play for the State.

Lambert McBride has said: "A lot of whitefellas' gave him credit but the cricket board did not - lots of discrimination in my personal opinion."^2

Career.

In some harsh respects the cricket career of Eddie Gilbert exhibits the exploitation by others of a relatively powerless individual for social, economic and personal reasons. Even so, Gilbert was never reported as openly complaining about his treatment during the various controversies of his cricket career. His reaction and behaviour in the face of his treatment were for the most part impeccable. His private life was to show otherwise, and certain personal actions were to change in response (or resistance) to the mixture of adulation and stress that his career was to give. Few people could have handled it well, let alone a powerless and insecure Aborigine from the isolated existence of reserve life. Gilbert's cricket career was in a white world with white officials and away from familiar surroundings and the emotional support of

‘togetherness’ that Aborigines often need. Despite his achievements and successes at no time did Gilbert threaten or encroach on the racial boundaries of white society.

**Performances in first-class cricket.**

Gilbert proved to be devastating in local competition but was never able to regularly repeat this at first-class level. One less than flattering report summarised his performances.

> Moody and unpredictable, his bowling was not consistently fast and it was not unusual for him to be hit around the ground once the fire had gone from his initial half-dozen overs.\(^3\)

Despite any perceived shortcomings he enjoyed popular support at all levels.

In order to gain and maintain an equal footing with the white players, Gilbert was continually under pressure to distinguish himself with his playing performances. He did not have the opportunity to perform badly without some close examination of the reasons for this. The extraordinary lengths that the Department went to in reviewing his efforts against Victoria at the end of 1932, and in which Gilbert injured his shoulder, was an example of this.

At the end of his career Gilbert had averages which placed him in the top half-dozen or so bowlers in Sheffield Shield cricket to that time. He had also topped the averages, if not the number of wickets, for both Queensland and the Sheffield Shield in two seasons.

During Eddie Gilbert’s first-class career of 23 matches for Queensland, he took 87 wickets at an average of 29.21. He captured five or more wickets in an innings on six occasions, with his best figures in an innings being six for 64. His batting average was less impressive, and in his 41 innings he scored a total of 224 runs for an average of 7.22. His highest score was 34, not out. Gilbert’s career was based on the restricted role of a bowler. His performances with the bat, including a number of centuries in club cricket, suggested he deserved a higher place in the batting order than close to last man. Little opportunity was given to prove himself in first-class

---

\(^3\) Des Buckley. ‘Aboriginal’s pace ‘uncomfortable’ even for Bradman.’ Sun-Herald (Sydney), 4 March 1984: 60.
cricket as a batsman. He was considered an average fielder and took only four catches during his first-class career.

**Bowling Action.**

Various accounts of Gilbert's bowling action have been presented. The action was most unusual for a fast bowler. His pace came from his wrist, arm, and body action and not from a long run-up. Gilbert's bowling action was to place considerable strain on his shoulder with his quick, 'whippy' arm action. It is no coincidence that shoulder injuries were to plague him throughout his career.

If Gilbert had been able to avoid some shoulder injuries during his career, and he was used more effectively, he would have achieved better results and his career may have been prolonged. On at least one occasion during his career, his action and run-up were changed, but this proved to be unsuccessful and he reverted to his original action. His grip on the ball was a basic one with fingers along the seam and there is little evidence to suggest that he was given much serious tuition in bowling. His bowling did not possess any great variety and he was unable to generate much swing or movement off the pitch.

The psychological effect of being no-balled and the pressure that this placed Gilbert under must have added to the scrutiny to which he was subjected. This was partly offset by the sympathetic public support and paternalistic guidance that he obtained. Notably, there was little questioning of his bowling action when he was not successful in taking a number of wickets.

It is virtually impossible to say whether Gilbert did or did not throw. It is certain he did not consciously do so. After a review of the bowling, it is hard not to believe that his bowling was entirely fair. Only an examination of films using modern techniques could alter such a view. Unfortunately no film of his bowling has been unearthed. Significantly, in the opinion of most of his contemporaries, his bowling was fair.
Footwear.

In a pre-occupation which appears to have racial overtones, there was a fair amount of interest in Gilbert’s footwear and the attempts to overcome the problem. Some of this interest was undoubtedly based on the accepted ‘fact’ that, as an Aborigine, he was unaccustomed to wearing shoes. He may well have preferred to go barefoot in some circumstances, but the whole matter of footwear seemed ‘overdone.’ On at least a few occasions problems caused by his boots caused him to leave the field, or brought on irritation or injury, which in some way affected his bowling performance. An explanation for many of these problems could be directly related to his bowling action and the stress placed on him.

Controversies.

Gilbert had a highly controversial cricket career and one which was dogged by rumours about his bowling action. This and other controversies often served to make him more appealing to the general public. These controversies included: allegations that he threw the ball while bowling (a doubtful action); that his temperament was not suited to first-class cricket (character and racial overtones); evidence of racial discrimination within the Queensland Sheffield Shield team; suggestions about intimidatory bowling; hesitancy by South Africa to play against Gilbert on racial grounds; racial comments by the president of the Rockhampton Cricket Association; a disruption to his career due to a leprosy ‘ban’ at Cherbourg; the financial problems experienced in pursuing a first-class career; the inconsistent actions of state cricket selectors and the Q.C.A. (and various issues related to Southern tours); a ban from local competition due to the ‘dangerous’ nature of his bowling; and, Bradman and comments he made about Gilbert in a ‘talkie’ interview and at other times.
Australian Honours.

There were times during Gilbert's career when he was proposed as being good enough to play for Australia. This was not to occur. Yet, there is something to suggest that Gilbert, in capturing the imagination and interest of the public by his performances, was as close as any player could be to being selected to represent Australia.

Howell has indicated that white Australians had originally introduced cricket to Aborigines as one way of imposing their culture on the Aboriginal people, but "if the Aborigines learned the culture too well, then they stood the risk of outright rejection by the white community."  

Cricket was the white man's game. An Aborigine succeeding in top class levels of cricket was, on face value, easily interpreted as a threat to the position of cultural dominance of white Australia during the 1930s. Howell has said:

> The ethnocentric ideology prevalent in Australia, the national fervour that surrounded cricket, and the racial stereotype that existed for the Aborigine, all argued for exclusion of an Aborigine from cricket at the highest possible level of the game. Although it was not openly verbalized [sic], it is highly possible that when it came to playing cricket for Australia, Gilbert had to contend with unspoken, institutional racial prejudice at the highest levels.  

By playing at a lower level Gilbert was not seen as a threat or a challenge to white authority because he obviously 'knew his place.' Nevertheless, his personal qualities such as respect for authority were repeated in the popular press to ensure he would be accepted. In the event of Gilbert being picked to play at the national level, those responsible for the decision would have to be prepared to have their actions placed under the closest scrutiny imaginable. If he were to succeed, he could be held up as an example of the enlightenment of certain sections of the community and an example of what could be done for Aboriginal people. If he were anything less than an outstanding success, then those responsible for his elevation would have been seen as

---


5 ibid.
not fulfilling the role entrusted to them. In short, then, there were compelling reasons for not selecting him in an Australian team, but this view does not do justice to the various arguments about the merits of his selection in an Australian team.

Seemingly against the odds, Gilbert was often proposed by various authorities and many of the general public as having the talent and ability to represent Australia.

No Aborigine has ever been selected to play cricket for Australia. From the turn of the century there had been two other Aboriginal first-class players besides Gilbert. These were Albert Henry (1900s) and Jack Marsh (1900s). Uncanny similarities existed in the careers of the three, especially with regard to allegations about them throwing the ball.

1. They lived on reserves under white protectionist control.
2. All had speed, agility, and accuracy while bowling or fielding.
3. All decisions regarding their careers were made for them by selectors or white officials.
4. All had their bowling actions and tactics questioned.
5. All were fast bowlers.

Coincidence perhaps, but it is difficult to compare, in the historical context, all the factors and influences that affected their careers to see if there was more to these similarities.

During the years that Gilbert played first-class cricket for Queensland, he proved to be fairly successful and on many occasions showed that he possessed bowling talents close to that expected at the international level.

In relation to possible selection in an Australian team, Frith, in his book, The Fast Men, was to suggest:

He lacked stamina, he was black, and he came from the Cinderella State. Otherwise, he might have been Australia's first and so far only Aborigine Test player. 6

Wally Hammond, the great England cricketer, was to suggest that Gilbert "might have made the English tour if his bowling, which was generally approved in Australia, had been delivered with a

---

straighter arm."^7

Gilbert's name perhaps may have featured even more strongly in discussion of Australian teams if he had not been dogged by accusations about his bowling action; suffered a number of shoulder injuries; had more success in bowling on southern wickets; and, the 'body-line' tour by the England cricketers during the 1932-33 season had not taken place.

He performed well in the 1930-31 season and could have been considered against the West Indies, especially when the series was already decided. However, the Australian team was performing well and was difficult to change. The added point that he was 'new' on the scene could have been a decided factor against him.

Whether he was good enough or not, he was not selected against South Africa. He would not have been seen as a certainty and his selection by the visitors might have been interpreted by the South Africans as an attack on the racial policies of their country.

After the no-balling incident in Melbourne in 1931 and his uninspiring performances on the southern tour, he was possibly never again to be a serious consideration. The flurry of interest, including the idea that Gilbert should bowl 'body-line' in 1933, was not a serious enough consideration as other bowlers with greater accuracy could have been asked to bowl that way. Gilbert had 'shock' value but the prevailing view about his ability to bowl in a Test match for an extended time would not have counted in his favour. Even though on occasions in his career he bowled long stints quite well, he was viewed as being at his 'peak' for only a few overs.

Reasons why Gilbert did not play for Australia would include: the influence of the prevailing racial attitudes of the population (including the selectors); injuries and form; the timing of his possible selection (the opposition); the fact that he was from Queensland; the focussing on his faults (especially 'no-ball' allegations); doubts about his ability to bowl for extended periods of time; and, other players may have been better at the time.

---

No attempt has been made to compare the significance or emphasis of each. However, from a purely performance aspect, Gilbert was not selected because his standard at a particular time did not appear to warrant his selection.

Allegations have been made of racism and institutional barriers within cricket which acted to deny Gilbert the opportunity of achieving the highest honours in cricket. Certainly Robert Crawford, the schoolteacher at Cherbourg who had a great deal to do with Gilbert, thought he deserved to be in the Australian team. He believed that ‘our Eddie’ had performed well enough to have earned his place in the Test team and that racial barriers would be broken down and he would gain the reward commensurate with his ability.⁸

Gilbert, perhaps convinced of his ability by supporters such as Crawford, was keen to play for Australia. The internal and external pressures on Gilbert may have had a telling effect on the man. The deserving candidate was not able to produce the ‘superhuman’ effort he needed to gain selection.

Media.

In press reporting sportspersons are often glorified or vilified. The media create a perception or image of a player. That image then becomes the public’s image or perception of the player.

The importance of an individual can be elevated or distorted by the media and the creation of legendary status can sometimes be based on untruths or myths. The newspapers had a large part in creating the legend that was to be Eddie Gilbert - a legend which has grown over time and to which various ‘stories’ have been added. Gilbert was often pictured in the popular press as being ‘different’ to the average Aborigine in an undisguised attempt to help gain acceptance for his inclusion in the State team.

The radio and popular press played an important part in firstly ‘selling’ Gilbert, then in focussing on him and his performances to create an interest in him. They developed and expanded that interest, often for their own purposes. The popular press could see that they were on a ‘sure thing’ by the role they assumed in relation to Gilbert.

The papers highlighted the controversial aspects of Gilbert’s career and, by examining these in detail, often added to the controversy. Gilbert certainly helped to sell papers even if the papers overlooked any detailed analysis of the Aboriginal question and Gilbert’s background, life and career. There is no doubt that Gilbert was responsible for increased interest in cricket, particularly in Queensland, and was responsible for increased attendances at many matches.

**Syphilis.**

Suggestions have been made that Eddie Gilbert suffered from congenital syphilis and this may have had some effect on his physical condition and performances during his career. After an examination of all the information available it is clear that he did not have congenital syphilis but he did contract syphilis at some time, possibly after his career ended. This condition was later controlled and for various reasons he developed a dementia-like condition not related to syphilis. He survived in an institution for many years in a greatly affected state before he finally died.

Even if Gilbert had syphilis during his career the effect on his performances would depend on the stage of the disease and his own reaction. This could range from little or no effect to some influence. Perhaps the condition may have contributed to his susceptibility to injuries, though it is far more likely that his bowling action was the cause of most of these. There is no evidence to suggest that people were aware of any disease during his career though this is not conclusive proof that he did not have the condition.
Various comments indicate that Gilbert was anxious and apprehensive about his performances. Despite outward appearances or media depictions, Gilbert was not always the relaxed or happy person he was supposed to be. He was under more pressure than other teammates because so much of the success of the team, particularly in bowling, seemed to centre on him.

The various controversies and discrimination Gilbert experienced, undoubtedly, along with more personal influences, affected him deeply. He tried hard to ‘fit’ in but was not totally accepted. Eddie Gilbert had a good sense of humour with those he was comfortable with, but usually ‘clammed up’ under pressure or in unfamiliar situations.

Gilbert had much of his social life controlled and manipulated. When given the opportunity, and in line with the actions of some other settlement inmates, he rebelled against many of the practices and procedures expected of him. He drank heavily and was promiscuous.

After his career.

After his first-class career had ended, Gilbert played cricket for a short time only. He did not show much interest in coaching or playing regularly. From some of his actions and reported comments he had a ‘let-down’ as he moved back into a settlement lifestyle. The gradual decline in his personal life clearly showed that his success in first-class cricket was to be of little value in re-establishing a meaningful existence amidst the controls and pressures of settlement life.

The success of his career and his reputation occasionally allowed him to get away with behaviour that the white officials often did not tolerate in other inmates. This was not to last. When he showed little inclination to work and became addicted to drinking and gambling there was a change in attitude of officials at the settlement. This included some people with whom he was closely associated during his cricket career.

He became a restless ‘troublemaker.’ A decision was made to grant him a temporary
‘exemption’ and to have him move away from the settlement. As later events proved this was not a wise decision. He was to live an aimless life for several years. In 1949 he began to display signs of mental instability and he was finally sent to an appropriate institution. He spent his remaining years there, a prisoner of his mind.

**Aboriginal People.**

In spite of their background and limited opportunities, numbers of Aborigines at Barambah excelled at different sports. Sport was a source of great pride and enjoyment and it provided an outlet for the boredom of much of their existence.

Although associated with the northern tribes, Gilbert’s accomplishments were Barambah ones and achievements in which all inmates could share and rejoice. Gilbert was the ‘Bradman’ of Aboriginal Australia and was the only real hero at a national level they had to that time. His skin colour was viewed by them as the reason he was denied any opportunity of being installed into a deserved place of recognised significance in Australian cricket history.

The first-class cricket career of Eddie Gilbert did little to boost the status and opinion of Aborigines within the general white community where there was a general loathing and mistrust of Aborigines.

It may be pure speculation to suggest that Gilbert’s career, as exemplified by his achievements, only served to harden actions against Aborigines and restricted, if not denied them, any further access to social acceptance and mobility. Gilbert’s career in many ways was a reminder of the ridicule, intolerance and inhuman treatment often given to Aborigines.

Aborigines believed that Gilbert showed that a black man could be as good as, if not better, than a white man. His cricket career obviously meant a great deal to the people at Cherbourg despite his not being allowed the opportunity to speak up on behalf of his people. Even if he had been given this opportunity his character may not have been ‘assertive’ enough for him to make any demands or pleas for their advancement. Despite this, his presence may have
served as a small reminder to politicians and others that these people really did exist. In some immeasurable way, the attention that was focused on Gilbert and his home settlement probably helped to improve a few of the conditions for at least some time. Although Gilbert was allowed to have a career in cricket, and despite the fact that there were other fine cricketers at Cherbourg, it was quite clear that one Aborigine playing cricket at the first-class level was enough.

Eddie Gilbert was proud of his 'blackness,' especially when he was with other black people and was the centre of their attention. How and whether this was to be a source of inspiration to Gilbert is a subject of some conjecture. The feeling is that it may have been at various times, or on some special occasions (such as against Bradman).

Because of their often limited and filtered view of the world 'outside' it is difficult to determine whether or not many Aborigines in other reserves around Australia knew of Gilbert or were affected in any way by his achievements. The impression is that he probably had little impact or influence. It can be argued that those supposedly involved with the welfare of Aborigines, and others involved with Gilbert, 'copped out' of the opportunity to use his experiences and cricket career as a role model for Aborigines and an opportunity to foster a change in attitudes towards Aborigines as a whole.

Despite the popularity Gilbert enjoyed with Aboriginal people there were some in the Aboriginal community who were jealous of him, or had some personal grievance against him. This was to occasionally surface in violence, particularly after his career had ended and he was drinking heavily.

Bradman and Gilbert.

During the Depression years of the thirties Bradman was a national hero to the crowds. He was someone who added enjoyment and excitement to the lives of all people.

The achievement that Eddie Gilbert is remembered for more than any other is his dismissal of Don Bradman for a 'duck' (no score). It was an achievement which gave Gilbert
national fame, and is still spoken of with great admiration and pride by Aborigines. For most people it is the only piece of information they possess about the ‘Barambah Boy.’

Bradman and Gilbert played against each other on three occasions. Gilbert was, perhaps like so many other bowlers, very keen to do well against Bradman. On the first occasion Gilbert had Bradman out for a ‘duck.’ On the second, Bradman nullified the threat of Gilbert and scored over 200 on a flat Adelaide wicket. It was a feat in which he took great delight. On the third meeting, Gilbert was once again to take Bradman’s wicket.

Bradman emerged a winner in the game of cricket, while Gilbert disappeared from the scene long before Bradman’s career ended.

A comparison between the achievements of Gilbert, the fast bowling Aborigine, and Bradman, the greatest batsmen in the history of cricket, is a poor one indeed. However, at various times during the 1930s both shared the headlines - Gilbert more often than not for the controversies and Bradman for his achievements.

Bradman was never happy about the depiction of an Aborigine conquering him. There is no evidence of open antagonism by Bradman towards Gilbert but certain of his comments and actions as well as reports at the time give an impression that he neither liked facing Gilbert nor believed he was a totally fair bowler. Bradman was not unique in his views as they were representative of the opinions of many cricketers of the time.

Summary.

Gilbert proved to be as good as the best of the other fast bowlers in Australia. His career was interfered with and disrupted by the actions of various white people although there was usually no hostile reaction by authorities within the sport, community leaders, the public and the media. When he became recognised for his ability as a cricketer, he was given a surprising level of acceptance. Even so there were still occasions when racial prejudice was in evidence.
He was protected from some aspects of discrimination but exposed to others. On balance, he was possibly more profoundly affected than most people due to a wider range of experiences. The intense scrutiny of his life and performances due his popularity crossed the racial barriers of the time.

This study has shown how Eddie Gilbert, as an Aborigine, was subjected to various influences which greatly affected his personal and cricket career. They were significantly different from those to which a white person and other Aborigines may have been exposed.

Eddie Gilbert was not a typical Aborigine of the 1930s. His background and early experiences were the same as a great many institutionalised Aborigines at the time. But his character, formed in part by his experiences, his development as a cricketer and the popularity he brought to the settlement and local area, combined with his later experiences during a first-class cricket career, were to create an individual who was anything but typical. He was basically quiet and withdrawn for the most part, particularly early in his life. He did not appear to join in many of the boisterous activities of other youngsters and was a fairly obedient, institutionalised Aborigine. Later, when his cricket career began, he became more confident, but he did not have an assertive nature. There is enough to suggest that his early career was benevolently ‘helped’ by actions such as changing his date of birth. In the racial climate at the time it was amazing he was allowed to progress as far as he did. His media and paternally constructed popularity allowed him to be seen, for a time at least, as ‘different’ from other Aborigines, somehow better, more intelligent and more ‘white’ in character. Gilbert proved to be a talented and exciting sportsperson who was seen as important to the success of the Queensland Sheffield Shield team. For many people who may have been otherwise racially bigoted, his colour was not to be an important factor in his acceptance.

Gilbert was an ‘underdog’ and Australians were said to love one such and, by playing the white man’s game of cricket, he was accepted, if for no other reason than the fact that sport was
supposed to provide equal opportunities. This did not fully protect him from some of the worst aspects of a racist society in the personal treatment by some of those players, officials and others with whom he was associated. Some motives included overt racism, greed, jealousy and actions attached to self-promotion. It is clear that his experiences were to affect his later life. There is some flimsy evidence to suggest that Gilbert may have had syphilis during his career but the impact of this condition on his performances, if indeed he suffered from it, would have been minimal. It is more likely he would have been affected by an inadequate diet from birth. His life was important to Aborigines at the time if for no other reason than to improve their morale and give a few others at the settlement the belief that they had some opportunities in sport. As for any other benefits in the advancement of the Aboriginal race, they are doubtful. After his career ended, Gilbert drank heavily and became bitter, rebellious and disenchanted with his life.

Gilbert was a marketable commodity during the difficult years of the depression. Like Bradman, he gave people a focus and talking point, and in so doing helped Queensland cricket. The life of Eddie Gilbert is important in that it ‘chips’ away at the issues and situations of that time. By studying a person who received a great deal of attention, there is some opportunity for remembering and considering the life and conditions of Aborigines generally.

In this study, an attempt has been made to outline and discuss information of relevance to the life of Eddie Gilbert. Because of the paucity of biographical studies on Aborigines, any specific recommendations for further research would centre on the need for more studies on Aboriginal people. It is important for Aborigines to gain some information about their history and to realise how people suffered from oppression and yet were able to survive. It may serve to inspire and ensure that events are not repeated.

The advantage of studying individuals is that their achievements can be accurately outlined and understood and their relevance to the historical and social contexts in which they are located can be appreciated. This study presents some insights into the experience of one Aboriginal
cricketer in an area of white society that is fairly non-typical. Sport purports to offer a degree of racial and social equality to its participants. This is not found or supported by actions or events of society at large.

To be remembered by others is seen as recognition of the achievements of a person, but to pass into history with respect is something much more. The telling of Eddie Gilbert’s story may ensure he receives the recognition he deserves.

**Conclusion.**

This study has made an important contribution towards Australian sport history. The researcher believes that if we are serious about understanding aspects of the involvement of Aborigines in sport then various different types of studies of Aboriginal sportspersons must be undertaken. For example, there is little knowledge regarding the consequence of sport involvement for race relations. However, when considering the material presented in the study it is not possible to make generalisations beyond the particular time context outlined in the study.

Eddie Gilbert was a unique individual, not in the sense of great human achievement, but because of his achievements and experiences as an Aborigine. He was unable to undertake responsibility for much of his own life. There was no place for this under the rigid control of the Act.

The years of Gilbert’s life were to see a number of changes with regard to the treatment of Aborigines. Sadly, much of the racist nature of Australian society has remained.


Barwick, Diane. 'Writing Aboriginal History.' Canberra Anthropology. No. 4., 1981: 24-36.


Day, R. and Lindsay, P. *Sport History Research Methodology.* Proceedings of a workshop held at the University of Alberta, 28 May - 1 June 1980.


Evans, Raymond. 'Don't You Remember Black Alice, Sam Holt?' Aboriginal Women in Queensland History.' Hecate. Vol. 8., No. 2., 1982.


Lecture on North Queensland History. Townsville: James Cook University, History Department, 1978.


Murphy, J.E. Wilderness to Wealth. Brisbane: Smith and Paterson, 1950.

Official magazine and programme Fourth Test Match Brisbane, 1933. Queensland Cricket Association, Brisbane: Lloyd’s Almanack, 1933.

O'Sullivan, Delores. 'The Cherbourg Tribe: some of their ceremonies and customs.' *Nelen Yubu*. No. 27., 1986: 3-11.


Reynolds, Henry. (Editor). The Other Side of the Frontier. Townsville: James Cook University, 1981.


Rosser, B. This is Palm Island. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1978.


Tennison, Patrick. ‘Cherbourg.’ Modern Times. August 1948: 4-6, 41.


Wisden's Cricket Almanacks. London: Sporting Handbooks and MacDonald Jane, [Annual].


Legislation.


Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, 1897-1934.

Official Publications/Reports.


Manuscript Collections.

Queensland State Archives.

Meston, Archibald. First Report on Western Aborigines. 16 June 1897. Col./143.

Colonial Secretary's Office - Correspondence relating to Aborigines.

COL/140-COL/145

Home Secretary's Office - Special Batches.

A/31708-A/31710

Home Secretary's Office - General Letterbooks.

COL/G138  COL/G149  COL/G147  COL/G236
COL/G143  COL/G176  COL/G160  COL/G250
COL/G144

Home Secretary's Office - Register of Letters 1931-35.

A/4736-A/4741


A/4742-A/4745; B/561-B/571

Home Secretary's Office - General Correspondence 1897-1935.

HOM/J1-807; A/3500-3814

Home Secretary's Office - Batch Files 1906-1935.

A/58852-A/58862; A/58912

Home Secretary's Office - General Correspondence 1931-1935.

A/3500-A/3814

Home Secretary's Office - Register of General Letters Received 1931-1935.

A/4736-A/4741

Home Secretary's Office - Register of General Letters Received 1936-1950.

A/4742-A/4745; B/561-571

Department of Health and Home Affairs - Register of Letters.

A/3817-A/4744
Home Secretary's Office - Register of Letters received 1931-1935.

HOM/B3; A/4736-4741

Education Department - General Correspondence.

A/15993 A/15994 A/15995

Home Secretary's Office - In-letter Registers 1906-1907.

POA/K1

Chief Protector's Office 1900-1905 - Miscellaneous batch.

A/44681

Chief Protector’s Office - Register of Exemptions 1908-1935.

A/58980

Chief Protector of Aboriginals - Correspondence Received 1904-1906.

A/44686

Chief Protector of Aboriginals - Register of Inward Correspondence 1904-1908.

A/58994-A/59006

Chief Protector of Aboriginals - Register of Deaths.

Transfer 1227/registers 17 and 18

Chief Protector of Aboriginals - General Correspondence and Registers.

Transfer 1227/30 Transfer 1227/128
Transfer 1227/34 Transfer 1227/194
Transfer 1227/36 Transfer 1227/Box 10
Transfer 1227/155 1938 Sport and Recreation

Director of Native Affairs Office - Register of Exemptions 1942-1964.

A/58978

Police Commissioner's Office - Miscellaneous correspondence and reports.

POL/J16 396M - 3 March 1947.

Meston papers. Mss F438.

John Oxley Library, Brisbane.


Zillman family manuscript. OM 74.028.

Department of Family Services and Aboriginal Affairs, Queensland. (formerly Department of Community Services).

Cherbourg Cemetery Register. Numbers 1 and 2.

Chief Protector of Aboriginals - Register of Removals 1908-1936.

Edward Gilbert. Personal file, 8E/137, restricted access.

Edward Gilbert. Social History Card.

Anglican Church Records relating to Cherbourg. The Church of the Holy Spirit.

Edith Gilbert. Personal file.

Edith Gilbert. Social History Card.

Department of Health - Wacol Hospital.

Edward Gilbert. Clinical records/file, controlled access.

Queensland Museum.

MacKenzie, Betty. Photographic collection and written material.

Queensland Cricket Association Archives, Brisbane.


Miscellaneous scrapbooks, letters, photographs and other information.
Theses.


Unpublished Material/Papers.

Blake, Thom. Draft notes and information related to Cherbourg.


Howell, Max, and Howell, Reet. Sport History (unpublished paper).


Tronson, Albert. Diary 1905 (copy of information in possession of Thom Blake, diary in possession of Mrs. B. Smith, Ashgrove, Brisbane).

Personal Information/Communication.


Personal Correspondence.

Frith, David. 1990.
Bradman, Sir Donald. 1990.
Interviews.

Goodchild, Doug. April 1990.
Other Interviews/Materials.

*Tapes in possession of Dr. Ray Evans, University of Queensland - Access gained December 1991.*

Bunda, Vince.
Chambers, Sam.

Chambers, Olga.
Chambers, Livingstone.
Stewart, Les.

*Tapes in possession of Mr. Harry Michel, Murgon - access gained April 1990.*

Cobbo, Sara.
Crawford, Robert.

*Personal information from Jill Linda McBride-Levi.*

Clarke, Irene.
Currie, Audrey.
Mace, Hazel.
McBride, Lambert.
Owens, William.
copy of drawing by Aboriginal artist, Charlie Chambers.

*Professor Max Howell and Dr. Reet Howell.*

Family photographs of Cherbourg presented to Max and Reet by Mr. and Mrs. Crawford.
Kindly loaned to the researcher.

*Queensland Art Gallery.*

Print of Ron Hurley diptych Bradman bowled Gilbert.
Newspapers and Selected Periodicals.

- Sporting Life, 1950.
- Bell's Sporting Life (Sydney), 1868.
- People, 1984.
- The Australasian Post, 1950.
- Sun-Herald (Sydney), 1984.
- Abo Call, 1938.
- The Brisbane Courier, 1922-33.
- The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 1933-92.
- The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 1924-33.
- Daily Mail (Sydney), 1930-36.
- Truth (Brisbane), 1906; 1930-34.
- Sunday Truth (Brisbane), 1966-72.
- Sports and Radio (Brisbane), 1933-34.
- Sports Referee (Brisbane), 1924-33.
- The Referee (Sydney), 1930-40.
- Adelaide Advertiser (Adelaide), 1930-36.
- Sydney Morning Herald (Sydney), 1930-36.
- The Daily Standard (Brisbane), 1927-36.
- The Age (Melbourne), 1930-36.
- The Sydney Mail (Sydney), 1930-36.
- The Queenslander (Brisbane), 1907-39.
- The South Burnett Times (Kingaroy), 1931-42.
- Stanthorpe Border Post and Stannum Miner (Stanthorpe), 1930-38.
- Sun Sporting Pictorial (Brisbane), 1928-30.
- The Sunday-Mail (Brisbane), 1933-92.
- Sunday Sun (Brisbane), 1975-91.
- Saturday Observer (Brisbane), 1912.
- Week (Brisbane), 1928-34.
- The Gympie Times (Gympie), 1930-38.
- The Gympie Truth, 1931-38.
- Bundaberg Daily News and Mail, 1930-38.
- Bundaberg Daily Times, 1930-38.
- Maryborough Chronicle (Maryborough), 1924-1936.
- The Telegraph (Brisbane), 1928-43.
- Queensland Arrow (Brisbane), 1932-33.
- The Nanango News (Nanango), 1931-37.
- The Kingaroy Guardian and Taabinga News (Kingaroy), 1930-38.
- Kingaroy Herald and Nanango News (Kingaroy), 1931-38.
- The Queensland Times (Ipswich), 1900-37.
- The Alert (Maryborough), 1928-37.
- The North Queensland Register (Townsville), 1930-39.
- Queensland Figaro (Brisbane), 1930-36.
- Melbourne Argus (Melbourne), 1930-35.
- Sydney Sportsman (Sydney), 1930-36.
- The Daily Telegraph (Sydney), 1930-36.
- Smith's Weekly (Sydney), 1930-34.
- The Bulletin (Sydney), 1930-37.
- The Sun (Sydney), 1930.
- Evening News (Sydney), 1930-31.
- The Toowoomba Chronicle and Darling Downs Gazette, 1930-36.
- Colonist (Maryborough), 1928-36.
- The Morning Bulletin (Rockhampton), 1930-36.
- Evening News (Rockhampton), 1930-36.
- Noosa Advocate and Cooroora Advertiser, 1932-34.
- Nambour Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser, 1931-36.
- The Mackay Daily Mercury, 1933-36.
- The Townsville Daily Bulletin, 1933-35.
- The Leader (Melbourne), 1930-36.
- The Herald (Melbourne), 1984.
- The Adelaide Chronicle (Adelaide), 1930-36.
- The Telegraph (Sydney), 1930-36.
- The Argus (Melbourne), 1930-31.
- The Sunday Sun and Guardian (Sydney), 1930-36.
- The Australian Cricketer, 1930-34.
- Murgon Advertiser, 1948-49.
- Truth (Sydney), 1930-36.
- Daily Sun (Brisbane), 1988-91.
- Sunday Pictorial (Sydney), 1930.
- Canberra Anthropology, 1981.
- Overland, 1959.
- Our Aim, 1930-36.
- The Australian Cricketer, 1930-34.
- The Cricketer (International), 1972-78.
- Historical Studies, 1971-84.
- Aboriginal and Islanders Sport Health Recreation Association, 1971.
- Nelen Yubu, 1986.
Selected Articles.

‘Aborigines have great record of achievement against whites.’ The Australasian Post, 13 July 1950: 9.


‘Barambah: Aborigines in Happy Surrounds.’ The Telegraph (Brisbane), 19 January 1932.


Buckley, Des. ‘Aboriginal’s pace ‘uncomfortable’ even for Bradman.’ Sun-Herald, (Sydney), 4 March 1984: 60.

‘Christmas at Barambah.’ Daily Mail (Brisbane), 3 January 1922.


‘Eddie Gilbert put black power into Shield cricket.’ Sunday Sun (Brisbane), 9 February 1975.


Jefferies, Harry. ‘The days of ‘Gabba’ glory.’ The Telegraph (Brisbane), 16 October 1971: 20.


Lack, Clem. ‘Native Comedy and Drama.’ The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 27 March 1937: 21.

Linneth, Tom. ‘Gilbert the cricketing legend.’ The Sunday-Mail (Brisbane), 4 November 1990: 70.

Ricketts, Steve. ‘Bell plans a ringing tribute to cricket’s great Eddie Gilbert.’ The Telegraph (Brisbane), 16 December 1985: 3.


SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The illustrations in this thesis are reproduced with the permission of many individuals, institutions and associations. In some cases photographs have been loaned by private persons and these people are unwilling to make these available to other researchers.

Figures

Map of South-east Queensland.

P.1. Map of Cape York Peninsula, North Queensland, showing distribution of Aboriginal tribes.

P.2. Native dance, Cooktown tribe.


1.1. Barambah cricket team - 1930s.
Robert Crawford photograph collection in possession of Prof. Max Howell, Brisbane.

1.2. Eddie Gilbert bowling.

1.3. Eddie Gilbert - grip on the ball.
The Telegraph (Sydney), 11 December 1930.

1.4. Eddie and Edith Gilbert - wedding photograph.
‘Barambah: Aborigines in Happy Surrounds.’ The Telegraph (Brisbane), 19 January 1932.

1.5. Eddie Gilbert - cricketer.
Robert Crawford photograph collection in possession of Prof. Max Howell, Brisbane.

1.6. The legend of Eddie Gilbert.

1.7. ‘Is He a Bowling Find?’
Sports Referee (Brisbane), 1 March 1930.

1.8. Eddie Gilbert bowling in the practice nets.
Eddie Gilbert photograph file, John Oxley Library (Brisbane).

1.9. Queensland Colts player Eddie Gilbert.
Eddie Gilbert photograph file, John Oxley Library (Brisbane).

2.1. Queensland versus South Australia - Parry caught off Gilbert.
The Brisbane Courier, 4 November 1930:16.
2.2. Queensland cricket team 1930-31 season.
The Queenslander (Brisbane), 13 November 1930: 16.

2.3. ‘Under a Cloud’ - some doubts expressed.
The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 16 December 1930: 15.

2.4. Aborigines in cricket - a cartoon view.
The Bulletin (Sydney), 19 September 1934: 34.

2.5. Does He Bowl or Throw? - newspaper headline.
The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 3 December 1930.

2.6. ‘This Gilbert Business’ - a racist view.
The Referee (Sydney), 10 December 1930: 12.

2.7. Gilbert involved in a mock trial during the Sydney game.

2.8. A welcome to Melbourne for the Queensland team.
The Herald (Melbourne), December 1930.

2.9. A cartoon summary of the Queensland versus Victoria match December 1930.
The Herald (Melbourne), December 1930.

2.10. Gilbert misses a chance given by Constantine of the bowling of Thurlow.
The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 14 January 1931.

2.11. The funeral of Collie Sheridan.

3.1. ‘Ban on Gilbert’ - newspaper headline.
The Sports Referee (Brisbane), 19 September 1931: 11.

3.2. The Bulletin cartoon on Aborigines in cricket.
The Bulletin (Sydney) 27 November 1935: 36.

3.3. Eddie Gilbert and Len Allen - film interview.
Robert Crawford photograph collection in possession of Prof. Max Howell, Brisbane.

3.4. Donald Bradman the master batsman.
The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 9 January 1936: 14.

3.5. Bill caught by Waterman off Gilbert.
The Queenslander, 12 November 1931: 28.

3.6. Bradman stumbled and fell after Gilbert’s second delivery.
The Queenslander, 12 November 1931: 28.

3.7. Waterman, the wicketkeeper, catches Bradman off Gilbert.
The Queenslander, 12 November 1931: 28.
3.8. Gilbert’s bowling action in various stages.
The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 21 January 1935: 12. Similar pictures appeared in other newspapers around Australia.

3.9. Eddie Gilbert - a bowler under ‘attack.’
The Courier-Mail (Brisbane) library, photograph file on Eddie Gilbert.

4.1. A section of the crowd watching the Queensland versus South Africa game.
The Queenslander, 26 November 1931.

4.2. Gilbert stumped by Van der Merwe off Vincent’s bowling.
The Queenslander, 26 November 1931.

4.3. Queensland versus Victoria match summary.
The Australian Cricketer, December 1931.

4.4. ‘Gilbert No-balled Again’ - newspaper headline.
The Herald (Melbourne), 19 December 1931.

4.5. Queensland Sheffield Shield touring team 1931-32.

4.6. ‘Throw or Bowl?’ - the special photograph of Gilbert’s bowling.
The Courier-Mail (Brisbane) library, photograph file on Eddie Gilbert.

4.7. ‘Arm Theory’ - a cartoon comment.
The Bulletin (Sydney), 1 February 1933.

4.8. Hurwood, Hele and Holdsworth - some key figures of the southern tour.

4.9. Newspaper headline from Queensland versus South Australia match 1931.
The Brisbane Courier, 28 December 1931: 5.

5.1. Eddie Gilbert with Mrs. Doris Crawford (Headmaster’s wife) and Mrs. Pat Bourke (Dormitory matron).
Robert Crawford photograph collection in possession of Prof. Max Howell, Brisbane.

5.2. Cottages at Barambah (Cherbourg) settlement - 1930s.
The Courier-Mail (Brisbane) library, photograph file on Eddie Gilbert.

5.3. Advertisement for cricket match at Ipswich.
The Queensland Times (Ipswich), 2 April 1932.

5.4. Eddie Gilbert and his favourite dog.
The Telegraph (Brisbane), 26 January 1935: 8.

5.5. Barambah cricket team with settlement officials.
The Queenslander, 9 April 1931.
5.6. White settlement officials - 1930s.
The Queenslander, 9 April 1931.

5.7. A cartoon impression of the Fourth Test.
Sports Referee (Brisbane), 21 January 1933.

The Queenslander, 26 January 1933: 28.

5.9. 'What's All This Fuss About Leg Theory?' - a cartoon view.
The North Queensland Register (Townsville), January 1933. Copy of cartoon from The Herald (Melbourne).

6.1. The state selectors (Holdsworth, Gill and Hutcheon) confer with Gilbert.
The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 26 January 1933: 9.

6.2. Schoolboys' idol - Gilbert surrounded by admiring youngsters.
The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 26 January 1933: 9.

6.3. Tobin (South Australia) clean bowled by Gilbert for 47.
The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 31 January 1933: 10.

6.4. Richardson and Lonergan walk to the pavilion, followed by Gilbert, at the end of the Sheffield Shield game.
The Daily Mail (Brisbane), 1 February 1933: 10.

6.5. England cricket team 1932-33 tour.
The Queenslander, 16 February 1933: 22.

The Queenslander, 9 February 1933: 21.

6.7. Gilbert with cricket ball.
Eddie Gilbert photograph file, John Oxley Library (Brisbane).

6.8. Listening to Test 1933.
Robert Crawford photograph collection in possession of Prof. Max Howell, Brisbane.

6.9. Murgon Representative cricket team 1933.
Fred Kratzmann, Brisbane. Private collection.

6.10. Gilbert in settlement band.
Robert Crawford photograph collection in possession of Prof. Max Howell, Brisbane.

6.11. Local identity Eddie Gilbert.
Robert Crawford photograph collection in possession of Prof. Max Howell, Brisbane.

7.1. Eddie Gilbert playing harmonica.
Eddie Gilbert photograph file. John Oxley Library (Brisbane).

7.2. Gilbert with cousins and film producer.
Eddie Gilbert photograph file. John Oxley Library (Brisbane).
7.3. Settlement inmates practising for a display.

7.4. Sports day on the settlement.

7.5. Eddie Gilbert batting.

7.6. Victims of Gilbert’s bowling.
The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 15 February 1935.

7.7. ‘In Deadly Mood’ - Gilbert bowling against New South Wales.
The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 18 February 1935.


7.9. Advertisement for Queensland versus M.C.C. match.
The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 29 November 1935.

7.10. Queensland versus M.C.C. match information.
Summary of information from various newspapers.

7.11. Queensland Sheffield Shield team 1935-36 southern tour.
Des Hansen, Brisbane. Private collection.

8.1. Queensland Sheffield Shield players 1930s.
Official magazine and programme Fourth Test Match Brisbane, 1933. Queensland Cricket Association, Brisbane: Lloyd’s Almanack, 1933.

8.2. ‘Split-second Speed.’
The Telegraph (Brisbane), 26 December 1935.

8.3. Wyeth batting with Woolloongabba scoreboard in background.
The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 13 January 1936: 16.

8.4. ‘An Artist’s Sidelight on Shield cricket’ - Queensland versus South Australia.
The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 13 January 1936.

8.5. Gilbert, the batsman, attacking the South Australian bowling.
The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 13 January 1936: 8.

8.6. Wyeth takes the catch to dismiss Bradman off the bowling of Gilbert.
The Queenslander (Brisbane), 16 January 1936: 24.

8.7. Queensland versus South Australia - match summary.
Summarised from the match reports appearing in various newspapers.
8.8. Personal note written by Gilbert.
Edward Gilbert. Personal file, 8E/137, restricted access. Department of Family Services and Aboriginal Affairs, Queensland. (formerly Department of Community Services).

8.9. A section of the crowd at Woolloongabba during a Sheffield Shield match in 1936.
The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 13 January 1936: 16.


9.2. Cherbourg Football team 1930s.
Robert Crawford photograph collection in possession of Prof. Max Howell, Brisbane.

9.3. Eddie Gilbert - a photographic portrait.
The Courier-Mail (Brisbane) library, photograph file on Eddie Gilbert.

9.4. Settlement worker Gilbert.
Robert Crawford photograph collection in possession of Prof. Max Howell, Brisbane.

9.5. Eddie Gilbert bowling for Toombul against Warehouse (1943).
The Telegraph (Brisbane), 6 February 1943: 8.

Cricket - Clubs and Associations. John Oxley Library, Brisbane.

10.1. Gilbert in the late 1940s.
The Courier-Mail (Brisbane) library, photograph file on Eddie Gilbert.

10.2. Eddie Gilbert at Wacol Hospital in early 1970s.

10.3. Notice of Death for Eddie Gilbert.
The Courier-Mail (Brisbane), 13 January 1978.

Figures - Appendices

Figure 1. Issuing Rations early 1900s.

Figure 2. Superintendent’s Quarters 1910s.

Figure 3. Cottages in 1930s.
The Queenslander, 9 April 1931.

Figure 4. Barambah settlement and surrounding area - 1930s (from Blake).

Figure 5. View towards girls’ dormitory - 1930s.
The Courier-Mail (Brisbane) library, photograph file on Eddie Gilbert.
Figure 6. School in late 1900s.

Figure 7. Rugby League team - 1920s.
Norman Fisher, Brisbane. Private collection.

Figure 8. Settlement officials in early years.

Figure 9. Aboriginal display 1914.