

Jack Holmes

..... was graded with Wests in 1925 and played eleven Reserve Grade and one City Cup game that year. He made his First Grade debut with Wests in 1926, playing six First Grade and ten Reserve Grade games. While at Wests, Jack showed promise but hadn't quite reached the stage where he was considered a regular First Grade player.

Jack Holmes made a strategic move to join the Newtown Club in 1927, and by round 6 found himself in First Grade where he remained consistently until the end of the 1931 season. But most importantly for Jack he was being recognised by the representative Selectors.

He played for NSW against Queensland Firsts on three occasions, his performance being good enough to be selected for the 1929-30 Kangaroo Tour to England. While Jack didn't play a Test on tour, he did play twelve tour matches against British Clubs. He was subsequently listed on the Australian Players Register as Kangaroo number 158.

The future was looking bright for Jack Holmes. While on tour he met and married an English girl and the couple settled back in Sydney and soon had a child. However at the end of the 1931 season, Jack became ill with appendicitis and died during the operation to remove the infected appendix.

The Sydney Sun newspaper reported on Jack Homes death in its edition on 10 September 1931;

"Jack Holmes, international rugby league footballer, and Captain of the Newtown Club, died at 5.30 am today at Western Suburbs Hospital following an operation for appendicitis on Tuesday. The passing of such a fine stamp of a young man in the prime of his athletic life, and in such a sudden fashion will come as a tremendous shock to the legion of footballers and followers of the game who knew him.

Jack was operated upon on Tuesday, but peritonitis and pneumonia supervened. Holmes who would have been 27 on October 14, was a fine footballer, and as a five-eighth won a place in the last team to visit England. A man of unassuming demeanour, he had an army of friends who will mourn his death.

He had played with Newtown since 1927, but next year would have been qualified for Western Suburbs, with which Club he played in 1926. He was first heard of with the Marrickville affiliated Third Grade team in 1924, and although "called up" by Newtown that year, he did not respond."

John James Holmes died on 10 September 1931 at Western Suburbs Hospital, Ashfield, NSW. His memorial is at Rookwood Cemetery, Rookwood, NSW, Section M2, Row 5, Plot 1545.

The rugby league and broader community grieved for the loss of Jack Holmes, and particularly his wife Mary and infant daughter Angela. To help the young family, a benefit match was played on 29 September 1931 at Earl Park, Arncliffe between Jack's Kangaroo team mates and a combined Newtown-Western Suburbs team, being Jack's former Clubs.

The line up for the Jack Holmes benefit match was a s follows;

Jack Homes Testimonial Match

"KANGAROOS"—N.S.W.: P. McMillan, capt.; A. Ridley, H. Finch, C. Pearce, Morris, three-quarters; Tait, H. Kadwell, halves; Troweoke, Gibbs, Bishop, Root, Justice, Brogan, forwards. Baird replaced Troweoke in the second half.

NEWTOWN - WESTERN SUBURBS: K. Ellis; Brady, Lind, Gartner, Hockey, three-quarters; Cameron, Mork, halves; Matterson, Bull, Thornton, Davies, Jones, McCarthy, forwards. In the second half, Owen, Wright, Kessoy, and Watson replaced Cameron, Gartner, Hockey, and Bull.

The benefit match and further contributions raised more than 300 pounds for Jack's widow and child, a sizable sum in the middle of the Great Depression. Individual contributions came from all quarters including Don Bradman. Eric Weissel on behalf of the Group 9 football team, who were in Sydney playing Souths, donated five pounds, with a further one guinea from Cec Fifield who said it was from Mrs Fifield noting that it was, "A small gift from one Kangaroo's wife to another."

