

Ted Ellis

..... was known by two names, so to ensure that the correct person had been identified as Wests player #18 it was necessary to research his background.

To understand how this came about a search of public records was undertaken and it was noted that Edward's mother, Mary Black married a George Morgan and Edward George Morgan was the youngest of four children from that union. It appeared that George Morgan had a serious health issue and was institutionalised.

Not long after, Mary (Black) Morgan formed a union with Edward Ellis senior (there is no record of a marriage), and they had four children, the youngest of whom was Royal "Roy" Arthur (Morgan) Ellis born in 1892. Roy Ellis has been raised as a possible candidate for Wests player #15, however there is insufficient information to support that possibility.

It is understandable why Edward George Morgan was called Edward Ellis. Edward would have only been an infant when Edward Ellis Senior came into the family's life and therefore Edward would have been raised by his mother and Edward Ellis senior along with the children of that union and the children of George Morgan.

A further complication arises as within a year of the birth of Royal (Morgan) Ellis, Edward Ellis senior disappeared, and another child was born in 1893, but the father is not immediately identified. From the public information available it appears that this was a child of Mary (Black) (Ellis) Morgan and Edward William Sarchfield. Mary (Black) (Ellis) Morgan and Edward Sarchfield appear to have had three children before they were married in 1899 and then another four children after that.

It would not normally be necessary to go into this level of detail of family relationships however in this case, because of the multiple names that weave in and out of this family's history it is necessary to develop some sort of road map to navigate the course and understand where the pieces fit. The surnames of Morgan, Ellis and Sarchfield are found throughout Edward Ellis's life story.

To try and simplify the story of Edward Ellis, it is noted that the family moved to the Sydney suburb of Campsie, NSW about 1903. The family were recorded at Cowper St Campsie on the opposite side of the Cooks River to Croydon Park and a relatively short walk to Ashfield. This area is also on the cusp of the Western Suburbs and St George Districts.

At that time, the suburb of Campsie was in the Western Suburbs rugby league district as there was no First Grade St George rugby league team until 1921. However, the situation was a little different in rugby union as from 1906 there was First Grade teams representing both Western Suburbs and St George, so rugby union players from Campsie and suburbs such as Belmore and Lakemba were most likely to gravitate to the St George Rugby Union Club.

However, Edward Ellis, as a twenty-year-old, played rugby union for Ashfield in the Metropolitan Second Grade competition in 1906 and 1907. He was not a regular player but did make appearances over the period. R Ellis (no relation) was also in that team, and he played regularly in the front row with Ted Mead and Bill Elliott. Many of the Ashfield team would go on and play rugby league with Wests.

Edward Ellis started the pre-season of 1908 playing with the St George Rugby Union Club but switched over to play rugby league with Wests in round three of that season. Edward was a regular member of the Wests First Grade team for the remainder of 1908.

Edward Ellis made no more appearances for Wests First Grade team after 1908. An article in the Evening News on 16 April 1909 reported that the Metropolitan Rugby Union was considering the reinstatement of players that went over to Rugby League in 1908. It noted that E. (Edward) Ellis was suspended until May 14 and F. (Frank) Frost (also of Wests) was suspended until June 30 after which the players could resume playing rugby union.

Edward Ellis, once again, had spent the pre-season with the St George Rugby Union Club and he was soon playing with the First Grade team in 1909. In newspaper reports of the time, he was referred to as E. Ellis, E.G. Ellis and Ted Ellis.

He quickly made his mark at St George and became highly regarded by both team-mates and the media. At the end of the 1909 season, the St George Call newspaper commented; "E. Ellis, that gritty little half, who so often gets swallowed up in a restless volcano of moving bodies and swinging arms and legs, only to be tossed out like a straw out of the road, needs to acquire the knack of swiftly scooping the ball out to his three quarters."

The St George Call newspaper in May 1910 commented on Edward Ellis being dropped for a particular game and noted; "One regrets to see Ellis out in the cold today, for that gritty, unfeared player is a sticker for his Club, and both in training and committee work is all there.

The team however wanted some change made, and though Ellis was not solely to blame for the weakness of the half back link between back and forward divisions, the scrum were the primary offenders.

The selectors in their wisdom have decided on a change which will be on trial today. Ellis is to be complimented on the sportsmanlike view he takes. It is a refreshing contrast to the petty spirit of others when asked to stand down for the benefit of their Club."

During 1910, Edward Ellis served on the St George Rugby Union Club general committee along with other notable players such as Ranji Joass, Dan Carroll and Harold Judd.

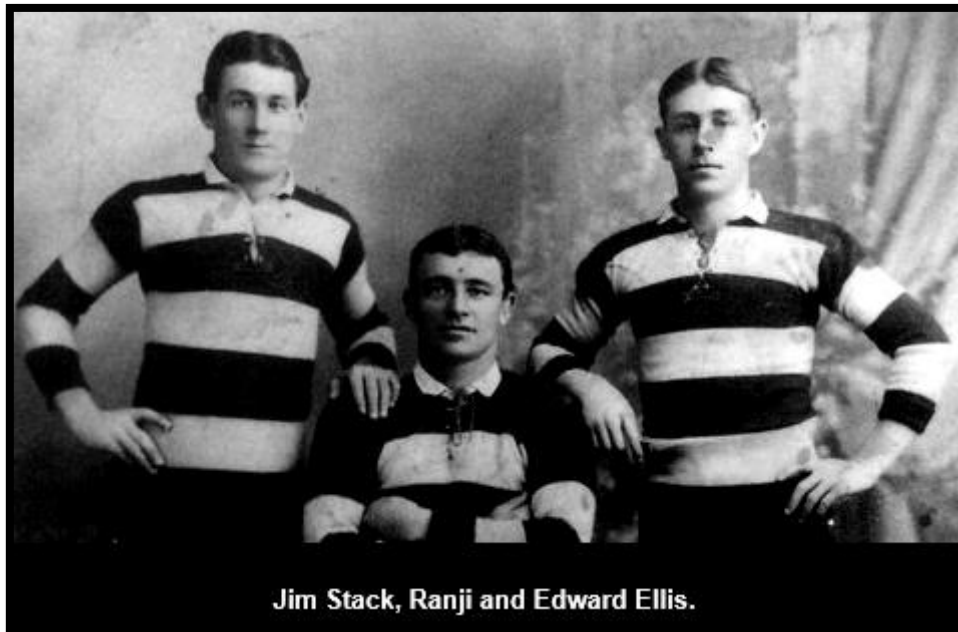
In September 1910, The St George Call newspaper reported; " We are pleased to report that E. Ellis, the Firsts half-back, who was confined to St Vincent's Hospital with a serious blood poisoning illness, which was all but fatal, was able to be out for a time on Saturday.

He is not by any means right yet, but we hope soon will be. "It is not clear what impact this serious illness had on Edward, but it did coincide with the end of his First Grade football career. No record has been found of him playing in 1911 and beyond.

In 1911 several St George rugby union players switched codes and went across to play rugby league with Wests, the most notable of these was Ranji Joass. There is a studio photo that has been provided by a grand-daughter of Edward Ellis, which shows Ranji Joass sitting with Jim Stack, a former Wests captain and Edward Ellis standing each side, in full Wests rugby league kit.

Given player movements, the photo is likely to have been taken at the start of 1911 and appears to be celebrating the arrival of Ranji Joass to Wests, which would have been quite a coup at the time.

The purpose of the photo is not known but Ranji Joass had already made a name for himself in rugby union and his switch to rugby league would have been quite a coup for Wests at the time. Jim Stack was the inaugural captain at Wests and his appearance in the photo would have been a symbolic welcome to Ranji but the inclusion of Edward Ellis in the photo is puzzling.



Jim Stack, Ranji and Edward Ellis.

Photo taken at Tesla Studios Ashfield - Source: Wests Archives

Further searches indicated that Ranji Joass and Edward Ellis appeared to have had a close relationship when they were playing with St George Rugby Union Club in 1910. They were reported as being the "comedians" of the team and on a visit to one of the country centres that year, Edward Ellis was described as the aide de camp to Ranji Joass.

As no record has been found of Edward Ellis playing any competition football after 1910, there is no logical reason for him to have appeared in a photo with Ranji Joass and Jim Stack in full Wests playing kit. However, a news item has been found, which reports on the rugby union players that trialled with various rugby league teams in April 1911.

The article notes that rugby union players Ranji Joass, Henry "Vic" West, (Edward) Ellis, Harry Gilbert (late of Sydney RU), Stan Wall, Jack Tully and Anderson all trialled with Wests. The first three players had played for St George RU in 1910, Harry Gilbert was reported to have joined St George rugby union in March 1911 but subsequently went to Wests. Wall and Tully were both Wests rugby union players and nothing is known about Anderson. Ranji's brother, Alf Joass who was also a St George rugby union player in 1910 also switched to Wests in 1911.

about fifteen hundred. In yesterday's matches the following Rugby Union players participated: O. Brown, Gilbert, Collier, Hilliard, and Nicholls all played with South Sydney; Ritchie and Glover, with Newtown; Joass, West, Ellis, Gilbert (late of Sydney), Wall, Tully, and Anderson, with Western Suburbs, and Munce with Anandale.

Sunday Times 2 April 1911

In, all there were five St George rugby union players that came across to play with Wests rugby league team in 1911 with two of the most senior and influential players being Ranji Joass and Edward Ellis. The photo with Jim Stack if nothing else was a powerful symbol, to those that might have waived, that it was OK to make the transition.

In 1913 Edward George Ellis was recorded on the electoral roll at the family home in Cowper St Campsie. That year he was married, moved to Lincoln St Campsie and had his first child. A second child was born in January 1916. Two months later he embarked for the Middle East and landed in Egypt in March 1916.

Edward Ellis enlisted with the AIF in December 1915 however his enlistment was under his registered birth name of Edward Morgan. Edward was posted to the 4th Reinforcements, 7th Field Company Engineers and he was designated as a Sapper. The 7th Company Field Engineers were one of three Engineers Companies assigned to the Second Australian Division.

The Engineers undertook a broad range of tasks including preparation and supervision of the construction of gun positions, excavation of trenches and dugouts, erection of wire and other obstacles, preparation of command posts, signalling and water supply, field engineering, road and bridge construction.

The 7th Engineers were providing a support role early in the battle of the Somme from July 1916 and remained there albeit a brief return to Belgium in October 1916, until fighting ceased on 18 November when snow made it impossible for fighting to continue.

On 14 November Edward Ellis was working on the front line at Geudecourt near Flers, France. Sappers from the 7th Engineers, 3 Section accompanied an attacking party of the 5th Brigade to construct and consolidate strong points along the front line. In the action four Sappers from the 7th Engineers were killed, one of these was Edward Ellis.

The military record of Edward Ellis (Morgan) indicates that his body was found by members of the 3rd Battalion AIF on 17 March 1917 and he was buried at "The Maze." His wife Kathleen advised the Australia Army that the inscription on his headstone should read "In a Hero's Grave He Lies." Sadly, his original grave at the "Maze" has never been found. He is remembered on the Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour, Haymarket NSW Government Railway and Tramway Honour Board, and the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial (Australian National Memorial, France).

