

Bill Elliott

.... and his brother Charlie were involved with the formation of the Western Suburbs Rugby League Club from the start. At the inaugural meeting Charlie Elliott was elected as a joint Club Secretary, and Bill Elliott was elected to the General Committee.

Bill Elliott played twenty two First Grade games between 1908 and 1911. He also played lower grade games but it is not known how many, as these were only sporadically recorded in the early years. Bill retired from First Grade football at the end of 1911, at the age of twenty nine. However it was evident that he looked after himself and remained fit, becoming a trainer for the Wests team.

Prior to the First World War, Bill Elliott served for six years with the 1st and 2nd Volunteer Unit at Ashfield. These units were a militia unit and were quite prevalent at the time. Young men were expected to attend training and those that didn't could be punished by a civil Court.

Bill continued with the Volunteer Unit at the outbreak of war, and during 1915/16 he and his unit were charged with guarding German internees at the Holsworthy "Concentration Camp", Sydney. At the age of 33 years and 8 months, Bill Elliott sought a discharge to enlist with the First AIF. He applied to enlist at the Royal Agricultural Showground on 3 July 1916 and was initially posted to the Dubbo Depot Battalion. However by August 1916, Bill was assigned to the 20th Battalion at Liverpool, NSW with the rank of Acting Corporal.

In 1916, Bill and his wife Emily (Walters) had five young children, William, Grace, Mable, Ron and Frank. A sixth child, Margaret was born in 1924. Leaving a young family behind to fight in a war across the other side of the world must have been difficult. Nevertheless, Bill like so many other young men at the time saw this as their duty.

By the later part of 1916, Australian Forces had been extracted from Gallipoli, and were undergoing training in Egypt and England, with reinforcements being sent from Australia. These refreshed Battalions were being readied for action on the Western Front in France and Belgium. Bill Elliott embarked for overseas duty in October 1916, arriving at Devonport, England on 28 December.

Bill arrived in France in February of 1917, in the middle of winter. The conditions were extremely cold and damp. By March and April Bill was on the front line around Bapaume, France. The conditions had an effect on him and he came down with Influenza and P.U.O (severe fever of unknown origin), and was evacuated back to England and admitted to the Kitchener Military Hospital at Brighton. After recuperating for a number of months, Bill was sent back to France in August 1917.

The 20th Battalion at this stage was in Belgium and on October 7, Bill Elliott and the 20th Battalion were at the Front Line near Ypres, Belgium. The conditions were difficult with drizzling rain that caused trenches to collapse and any movement was slow and awkward in the sticky mud. On that day heavy shelling was endured and casualties were significant. Bill Elliott was wounded in action. He received shrapnel wounds to the face and right hand.

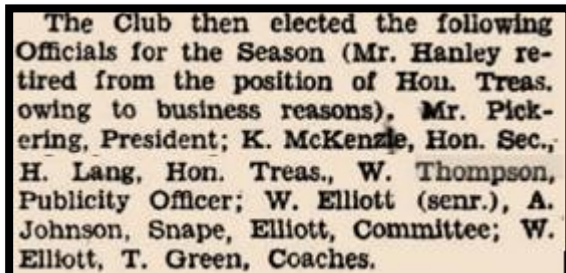
Bill's wounds were initially treated in France but within days he was once again evacuated back to England and admitted to the Norfolk Military Hospital at Norwich. Bill spent a few weeks in hospital and on discharge remained in England until March 1918, when he was sent back to his Battalion in Belgium.

Within a week of him arriving at the Front, Bill received accidental injuries to his face and hands. The Battalion at this time was at Wulverghem, north west of Lille and just over the border in Belgium. He was one of two casualties evacuated that day, and was once again transported back to England, being admitted to the Harefield Military Hospital on the outskirts of London. Bill recovered from his injuries but remained in England for the duration of the war. He embarked on the HMAT Delta for a return to Australia, and arrived in March 1919.

Bill was not done with military service and enlisted again in January 1942 for service in the Second World War. He was discharged in September that year.

Prior to Bill embarking for the First World War, he was living at Enfield, NSW in the heart of Western Suburbs territory. During the war, Bill's wife Emily moved to the southern Sydney suburb of Cronulla and when Bill returned in 1919, he also settled there and remained in the southern suburbs of Sydney for the remainder of his life.

Bill Elliott again came to notice in 1931 when he was elected as Publicity Officer for the fledgling Cronulla Club based in the Sutherland Shire. Bill's son, William Elliott junior was a prominent member of the Cronulla team at the time.



The Club then elected the following Officials for the Season (Mr. Hanley retired from the position of Hon. Treas. owing to business reasons), Mr. Pickering, President; K. McKenzie, Hon. Sec., H. Lang, Hon. Treas., W. Thompson, Publicity Officer; W. Elliott (senr.), A. Johnson, Snape, Elliott, Committee; W. Elliott, T. Green, Coaches.

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Bill Elliott's great grandson, David Blackhall has provided a personal account of his memories of Bill Elliott and his family for the Archive. He notes;

"I hold vivid memories of Bill's children (my Grandmother Grace's, brothers and sisters) of which there were six in total. We were a close knit family and had family catch-ups for the Elliott clan around Christmas each year during the 1960's and 1970's, as most of them lived and worked in and around Woollooware Road Cronulla. This was very convenient for all to attend, except Mable who lived in Leichhardt. My parents used to speak about Bill from time to time. I think he may have been in a nursing home during his later years so I don't have any vivid memories of Bill.

Bill's son Frank Elliott followed in his father's footsteps and served in the Australian Military Forces during WWII. While stationed in Singapore, he became a POW of the Japanese at Changi, Singapore. Although Frank survived this ordeal and returned to Australia at the end of the War, his siblings would comment how he was never quite the same Frank that they knew before he joined the army."

Bill Elliott died in February 1975, late of Kingsgrove and Cronulla.