

Alfred Rose

..... played only one First Grade game with Wests and was recorded playing at least one Second grade game for the Club. Alfred's appearance for Wests was in 1913, and no further record has been found of him playing from then until the outbreak of the First World War.

In April 1919, the Referee newspaper recorded the return of a number of Wests players from the war and noted;

"The Western Suburbs Club recently tendered a welcome home smoko to the original Anzac members, Westley Easterbrook, Sam Shaw, Alfred Rose, Eddie Griffiths and Cec Foord. All are sound in health after four years of active service. They hope to again serve the Club with the sanction of the selectors."

Finding Alfred Rose was a challenge notwithstanding that he had a military record and had played First Grade football. A search of public records failed to identify an A. Rose living in the Western Suburbs area and a search of military records did not give any clues to the identity of an A. Rose that may have been from the Western Suburbs District.

The other odd thing was that A. Rose was acknowledged along with four other Wests players that were original Anzacs and also prominent players before the war. These players were celebrated guests of honor at a smoko arranged by the Western Suburbs Club. While A. Rose may have been an original Anzac, he certainly wasn't a prominent player with the Club, having played only one First Grade game. So the question remained as to why A. Rose would have received such attention.

A further search was undertaken of the electoral roll for 1913, the year that A. Rose played with Wests, for any person with the surname of Rose who may have lived in the Western Suburbs District. This search revealed an Ernest Arthur Rose who lived on the Liverpool Rd at Ashfield.

A search of Ancestry family trees indicated that Ernest Rose was not the Wests player, however attached to his record was a story about Ernest Rose and his two brothers, who had all joined up to serve in the First World War.

Of interest was Ernest's older brother, Alfred James Rose who was reported to have captained the Australian Anzac Rugby Football team in England. Alfred Rose also became the recipient of a military award for his bravery in the field.

This would have certainly elevated Alfred Rose's standing as a prominent player and war hero and which may have encouraged Wests to acknowledge him along with the other prominent Wests players at the smoko in 1919.

The one issue of concern is that there was no record of Alfred Rose living in the Western Suburbs District, and of course if he did not live in the District, he wouldn't have been residentially qualified to play with Wests.

However, there might be a simple explanation. Both Alfred and Ernest Rose arrived in Sydney at the end of 1912 or beginning of 1913. Both men were Locomotive Engine Drivers and Ashfield was centrally located on the main rail line between the Clyde and Everleigh Railway Workshops.

Ernest Rose was living in Liverpool Rd Ashfield and it would be quite feasible that his brother Alfred Rose was living there as well. At the very least, even if Alfred was not living there, he may have used this address to circumvent the applicable residential rule.

To further support the connection between Alfred Rose's employment as a Locomotive Driver and his place of abode, an article appeared in the Evening news on 11 July 1913, the day before he made his one and only First Grade appearance with Wests. It noted that; "Rose, who represented the Harden District in the Rugby Union Code, will take the place of Carr in the forward division of Wests tomorrow."

It is known that Alfred Rose was not a native of the Harden District, so the question is, what was he doing there? The twin towns of Harden- Murrumburrah were once a major rail centre. It was on the main Sydney-Melbourne rail line and a major rail station was constructed in 1877.

The town's population subsequently expanded with the influx of workers employed in the railway workshops built to service the trains. As a Locomotive Driver it is likely that Alfred Rose was posted here for a period and he played rugby union locally.

Alfred Rose only had a short time with Wests and this may have coincided with a move by his brother, Ernest, to the inner city. It is known that Alfred Rose was living at Waterloo in 1914, but there is also a record of Ernest Rose living at Surry Hills in 1913. It is likely that at some point during 1913, both men moved out of the Western Suburbs District and therefore any association with Wests would have ceased as a result.

As a youth, Alfred Rose attended the Convent School at Hillgrove, NSW, however it appears that he was indifferent about attending school, and although of good character, did not obey his parents and eventually refused to go to school. He was recorded as being absent from his home and habitually wandering the streets. His parents were concerned that he could fall into bad company and get into serious trouble.

At the age of thirteen and at the request of his parents Alfred was placed before the Magistrate of the Sabraon and like a number of other Wests players, he became one of the Sabraon alumni. Alfred spent a year on the Sabraon training ship which gave structure, training and opportunity to young men who might otherwise have gone off the rails.

Alfred was a successful product of the system and was able to eventually move into stable employment. He was no doubt a talented football player and his time on the Sabraon would have assisted him in this area as well.

Prior to the First World War, Alfred Rose spent three years with the 6th Light Horse citizens forces which was primarily a militia force for home defence. The light horse regiments were numerous in country areas where horses were readily accessible and which remained the primary means of transport. It is likely that Alfred resigned from the 6th Light Horse when he came to live in Sydney.

Alfred Rose enlisted with the AIF in August 1914. He was posted to the 24th Company, Australian Army Services Corp, 3rd Divisional Train and his designated position was, Driver. A number of other Wests players served in the AASC which provided a wide ranging role to the related Infantry Battalions.

The Services Corp members were often embedded within the Battalions providing ammunition, food, and materials to the front line. At enlistment, Alfred Rose was recorded as being 179cm in height and weighing 76kgs, with a bullet wound scar on his right hip.

Alfred Rose embarked for the Middle East in September 1914 and was at Gallipoli in April 1915. He came down with what was described as Mediterranean Fever and was admitted to Hospital in Alexandria, Egypt in August 1915. He was subsequently transferred to Mudros, Greece before being sent to St Georges Hospital, London with severe sickness.

A news article in the Sydney Mail written in July 1916 gave a different version of events. It reported that;

"Driver A. J. Rose, an ex-Newtown footballer, who left Sydney with the first contingent, and was present at the Gallipoli landing, was wounded whilst on the Peninsula, and sent to England. Upon his recovery, he contracted fever and was forced to spend an additional period there. During convalescence, he was captain of the Anzac Football Team, which engaged in several important matches."

While the story is generally true, there are two major errors in the report. Firstly there is no record of Alfred Rose being wounded on the Gallipoli Peninsula. The military file is clear that the reason for his evacuation from Gallipoli was due to fever.

The second error refers to him being a Newtown footballer. An extensive search has been undertaken of past newspapers and there is no record of a player by the name of Rose playing First Grade football in Sydney after Alfred Rose played with Wests in 1913 up until the time he enlisted.

A search of past Newtown First Grade players has also been undertaken and Alfred Rose does not appear on that list. It is possible that Alfred Rose played lower grades with Newtown as these matches were rarely reported in detail.

However it is worthy to note that Alfred Rose lived in the South Sydney District and would not have been residentially qualified to play for Newtown. This also may have been a simple mistake in reporting where the Newtown Club was inadvertently referred to rather than Western Suburbs.

Alfred's military record confirms that he spent the best part of 1916 in England recuperating and during this time he apparently built up his strength by playing rugby. An article in the Sydney Mail newspaper in November 1917, reported, that when Alfred Rose was on furlough in 1916, he was captain of the Australian Rugby Anzac Football Team. Alfred Rose was in fact, the captain of a number of the Anzac teams that played in the early months of 1916, and was generally a prominent member of the Australian teams.

During the European late winter and spring of 1916, there was a flurry of sporting activities between mostly recuperating soldiers representing their national affiliation. This for Australian troops was a relatively quiet time between the withdrawal from the Gallipoli Peninsula and the concerted push on the Western Front by the middle of 1916.

Records and extracts of Alfred Rose's playing record have been found for this period, and these have been summarised to give an indication of Alfred's role and participation in these matches.

The first match that Alfred Rose played was in February 1916 and was reported in the Referee newspaper on 1 March. The report stated;

"A team of convalescent Australian footballers visited Hull and played the Rovers under Northern Union rules. The match, won by Rovers 12 points to 10, was played in a continuous snow storm. Privates Bland and King, Driver Rose, and Trooper Moffatt played fine games. There was 5000 enthusiastic spectators present."

The next match was against Cambridge University on 4 March 1916 and was reported in the Referee newspaper on 26 April. The report stated:

"The visit of the Australians (the Anzac heroes) proved a great attraction at Cambridge. It was a fast and finely contested game, and although the visitors dominated, the play in the second half, a draw was a fitting result."

Jack Redmond (West's #164) was reported to have played with no shoes but was still able to have a kick at goal, which was unsuccessful. Redmond also scored the final try of the match. It was also reported that Rose (the international), injured his leg and was carried off, but returned to the field later on.

A further search has been undertaken to try and find an international rugby player with the surname of Rose; however no record has been found. This appears to be another instance of the Referee newspaper embellishing its reports.

The Australian XV in this match was: - Pte. Boon, Tpr. Moffatt, Lieut. Sinclair, Cpl. Smith, Lieut. Huxley, Lance Cpl. Brighton, Lance Cpl. Redmond, Pte. King, Dvr. Rose (Capt.), Cpl. O'Brien, Pte. Vernon, Pte. Smith, Lance Cpl. Bosworth, Pte. Steele, and Lance Cpl. Voght.

A week later, on 11 March and reported in the Referee on 15 March, the Australians had a win against the Public Schools at Richmond in wet, wintery weather on a slippery turf. The Australians showed up well in the scrummages, followed up quickly, and their tackling was very sure, which neutralised the superiority of the Schools' three quarters. The Australians smothered the defence and rapidly scored three tries, two by Rose and one by Redmond. Redmond followed up with a further try to give the Australians the win.

On March 30, and reported in the Referee on 17 May, the Australians lined up against the old foe, New Zealand. This match was the third in a series against the Kiwis. The match was played on the traditional turf of the Rectory Field, Blackheath, London which was opened up for this match. The match was eventually lost 5 points to nil in favour of the Kiwis, but the Australians had improved over the period, making this game a real contest. It was reported that for the Australians, Hauenstein, Rose and Sinclair were conspicuously good and Boon at full-back was very safe.

The Australian XV in this match was: - Pte. Boon, Pte. Brighton, Sgt. D. D. Hauenstein, Cpl. Smith, Lieut. Huxley, Dvr. Rose, Lieut. Sinclair, Pte. King, Pte. Sullings, Pte. Ammott, Tpr. Moffatt, Pte. Steele, Lance Cpl. Bosworth, Lance Cpl. Redmond, and Pte. Vernon,

On 8 April 1916, the Anzacs played a North of England military team at Headingley, Leeds, in aid of the Leeds War Charities, drawing a crowd of 12,000. The game was played under Union rules and the Colonials gave a good account of themselves scoring two late tries to go down by two points. Rose could have won the match but was unable to convert the tries.

The final match recorded, was played at Swansea, Wales on 15 April 1916 between the Anzacs, and a West Wales XV before a crowd of 12,000. The Referee newspaper reported on May 31 that the match had been arranged in aid of the Mayor of Swansea's war fund, and while the Australians went down 23 points to 7, it was evident that the Australian Anzacs were a good side with players listed in the program for the match being;

Driver Rose (Captain), Lance Corp. Redmond (Vice Captain), Corp. Tracey, Corp. Smith, Pte Vernon, Pte. Boon, Pte. Brighton, Lieut. Huxley, Captain Dossiter, Lieut Sinclair, Sgt Hauenstein, Pte. Sullings, Trooper Moffat, Pte. King, Pte. Smith, Pte. Amriott, Lance Corp. Bosworth, Pte. Steele and Pte. Russell and Corp. Boyle (Trainers)

However, by match day the Australian team was further strengthened with Corp. Tracey, Captain Dossiter, Lieut. Sinclair, Trooper Moffat, Pte. Smith, Pte Amiott and Lance Corp. Bosworth, being replaced by Gnr. Gleeson, Q.M.S. Farnsworth, C-Sgt. Major McCabe, Pte. Devereux, and Q.M.S. Sheenan.

The newspaper report noted that, most of the Australians are rugby league players, and it is just possible that they were somewhat handicapped by having to take to the fifteen a side rules, which must come very awkward to those accustomed to the thirteen a side game.

During the first half of 1916, the war was focussed in the eastern sector of France, particularly around Verdun, which gave the Australian and other Commonwealth forces the opportunity to recuperate and re-group after the withdrawal from the Gallipoli Peninsula. However football became less of a priority by mid-1916 when the Australians participated in the Battle of the Somme in July, this being the first of a number of major battles that occurred where significant numbers of lives were lost.

Alfred Rose was back with his unit in August and by the end of the year had transferred to the 869th Company of the Australian Services Corp and was promoted to Corporal. The ASC supported the Australian 3rd Division which left England for France in November 1917, under the command of Major General John Monash. The 869th Company provided pack transport to the 3rd Division, bringing forward materials and equipment to the front line.

The 3rd Division was moved to the Messines sector in April 1917 and was engaged in its first major action in June when it took part in the Battle of Messines. On the night of 16/17 July Alfred Rose, while leading pack mules loaded with engineer materials to a storage dump near the front, was heavily shelled.

One of the high explosive shells caused the death of one officer and two other ranks and wounded six other ranks. Corporal Rose acted with great courage and presence of mind, bringing under shell fire his wounded officer to shelter, and assisted the other wounded and dead to shelter.

Alfred Rose was thrown and dazed by the force of the explosion and received a severe shaking, but remained at his post until the wounded were removed to the dressing station and all working parties had been sent back to camp. Alfred Rose received the Military Medal for his bravery and was promoted to the rank of Sergeant in December 1917.

Alfred spent some time in hospital with Trench Fever in 1918 but remained unscathed for the remainder of the war. He returned to England in September 1918 and was prepared for his return to Australia. He was posted to Submarine guard duty for the return trip and arrived in Australia in November 1918.

There is a sad postscript to Alfred Rose's life story. He was a single man when he enlisted in August 1914, but by the time he embarked for the Middle East in September 1914 he had married Catherine Carroll. Alfred returned in November 1918, however in June 1919 Catherine died. It is not known what caused Catherine's early death but the timing coincided with the Spanish Influenza pandemic. Alfred was married for almost five years but was away fighting in Europe for most of that time.

There is a collection of items relating to No. 567, Sergeant Alfred James Rose MM held at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. The collection consists of: Discharge Certificate, amended statement of pay and allowances, citation and extract from routine orders describing the action for which he was awarded the Military Medal and a congratulatory card from General Monash, work roster for the 869th Company, Army Services Corps, published photograph of Rose in an Anzac rugby

match at Abley Wood (Abbey Wood?). The collection also includes a charter of membership for the Alexandria sub branch of the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia, NSW Branch. (Note: The AWM record indicates that Alfred James Rose was born in 1891, which is not correct.)

Alfred Rose died at Waterloo, NSW in May 1941 and is buried at Rookwood General Cemetery, Catholic Section L, Row 19.