

Bill Wheeler

..... was referred to as a Wests junior, so a search of the Wests Archive disclosed that a forward by the name of W. Wheeler played in the Western Suburbs President's Cup team in 1934. A further search revealed that he also played in that team in 1933.

The Western Suburbs President's Cup team drew on players from Summer Hill to Homebush and from Concord to Enfield. Unfortunately there was little reporting on junior sports in this area and so young players would only get a mention, generally, if the sports event was reported in the major news media.

Western Suburbs President's Cup team to play at St. George at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Saturday, at 1.45 p.m., is:—
H. Stone; R. Atkins, L. Fisher, R. Gray, P. Kenane, K. Bush (one to be omitted); F. Gauvin, T. Knight (capt.); R. Ackling, F. Brighton, S. O. Norman, D. Murray, E. Barnier, W. Wheeler. Reserves: J. Adams, D. Harris.

Daily Telegraph 1 June 1933

SYDNEY CRICKET GROUND—12.20 p.m. Monday, June 4, 1934.	
PRESIDENT'S CUP	
WESTERN SUBURBS v. SOUTHERN DISTRICTS	
WESTERN SUBURBS (Colors—Black and White)	SOUTHERN DISTRICTS (Color—Green)
Full-back: 13—A. Gray	Full-back: 13—M. Behan
Three-quarters: 12—F. Baskett F. Gauvin—11 10—J. Cobcroft R. Atkins—9	Three-quarters: 12—F. Thorne A. Jones—11 10—J. Wonsan H. White—9
Halves: 7—K. Bush J. Knox—8	Halves: 9—K. O'Born W. Bailey—7
Forwards: 6—R. Ackling F. Brighton—5 4—E. Maskell A. Smith—3 2—S. Frappell W. Wheeler—1	Forwards: 6—E. Thorne J. Hancock—5 4—T. Parkes R. Allison—3 2—R. Smythe A. Patrick—1
Reserves: 14—L. Twaddell A. Peadon—15	Reserves: 14—A. Giancy F. Noland—15 16—W. Tighe L. Connel—17
Referee—E. WARREN.	Touch Judges—W. Williamson and W. Terry.

RLN June 1934

For W. Wheeler to have played President's Cup rugby league in 1934 he would have to have been under twenty one years of age, meaning that he would not have been born any earlier than 1914. A search was undertaken in the Western Suburbs junior rugby league catchment for a W. Wheeler that fitted this criteria. There was only one candidate and that was William Claude Wheeler who was born on 31 December 1914 at Dubbo, NSW.

Bill Wheeler grew up in the NSW central west town of Dubbo and a record has been found of him playing with the Dubbo Newtown Rugby League Club in 1931 and 1932.

Newtown.—Back, B. Pascoe; three-quarters, D. Lareombe, Doug. Wheeler, Don. Wheeler, K. Perrin; halves, J. Lareombe, M. Wheeler; forwards, W. Wheeler, A. Kinchella, D. Morton, C. Smith, E. Woods.

Dubbo Liberal 28 April 1931

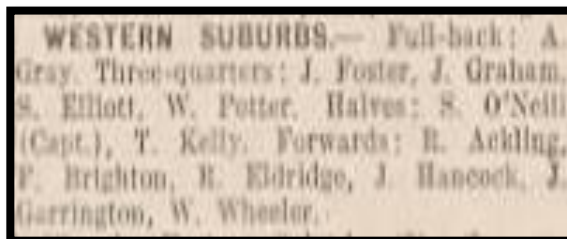
RUGBY LEAGUE
Newtown players to play at Geurio on Sunday are:—Full-back, T. Morris; three-quarters, D. Massart, K. Perrin, C. Harris, M. Gore; halves, D. Lareombe, Peggy O'Neill; forwards, B. Kinchella, W. Jacobs, W. Wheeler, G. Sharp, J.

Dubbo Liberal 6 May 1932

Bill was the youngest of four siblings and lived with his parents at South Dubbo. As an eighteen year old he would have been looking for work at a very difficult period, as the Great Depression was being felt in all localities across the country. It is most likely that he came to Sydney to find work and by 1933 had settled in the Western Suburbs district.

Why Bill Wheeler specifically came to the Western Suburbs district is unknown, but what is known is that former Wests player Frank Matterson was the captain/coach of the Dubbo team in 1932 and 1933 and his younger brother Jack Matterson played at Dubbo in 1932. Perhaps the Mattersons had some influence on Bill's rugby league career?

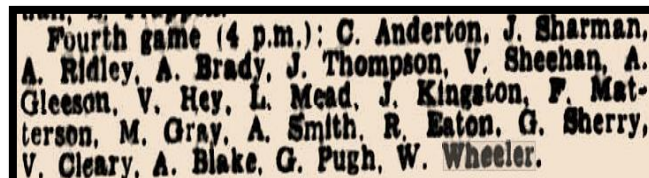
Bill Wheeler was quite a successful junior rugby league player making the Western Suburbs President's Cup team two years in succession. By July 1934 he had been graded with Wests and played three Third Grade games in the later part of that season.



WESTERN SUBURBS.— Full-back: A. Gray. Three-quarters: J. Foster, J. Graham, S. Elliott, W. Potter. Halves: S. O'Neill (Capt.), T. Kelly. Forwards: R. Ackling, F. Brighton, R. Eldridge, J. Hancock, J. Harrington, W. Wheeler.

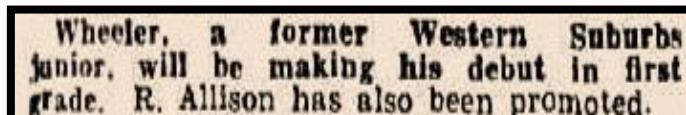
Third Grade Wests v Easts RLN 28 July 1934

While Bill Wheeler only played three Third Grade games for Wests in 1934, he received his chance to play higher grades in 1935. He was able to play with the First Grade team during the 1935 trials and then finally made his First Grade debut in July 1935. During 1935 Bill Wheeler played two First Grade, ten Reserve Grade and three Third Grade games as well as a game against Newcastle with the First Grade team during the round fourteen bye.



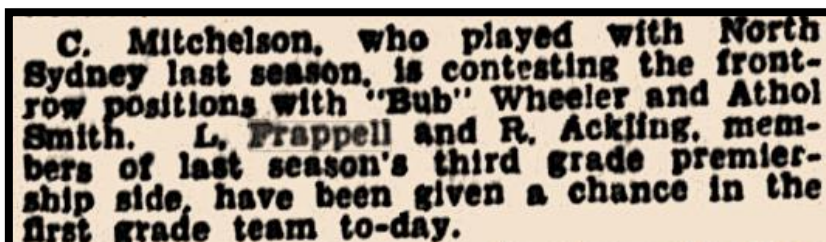
Fourth game (4 p.m.): C. Anderton, J. Sharman, A. Ridley, A. Brady, J. Thompson, V. Sheehan, A. Gleeson, V. Hey, L. Mead, J. Kingston, F. Matterson, M. Gray, A. Smith, R. Eaton, G. Sherry, V. Cleary, A. Blake, G. Pugh, W. Wheeler.

SMH 12 April 1935 (Trials)



Wheeler, a former Western Suburbs junior, will be making his debut in first grade. R. Allison has also been promoted.

Daily Telegraph 17 July 1935



C. Mitchelson, who played with North Sydney last season, is contesting the front-row positions with "Bub" Wheeler and Athol Smith. L. Frappell and R. Ackling, members of last season's third grade premier-ship side, have been given a chance in the first grade team to-day.

Labor Daily 17 July 1935

Bill Wheeler reached the pinnacle of his rugby league career in 1936. After Wests lost its first two games of the season, Bill Wheeler was one of a number of Reserve Grade players that were promoted to First Grade. He played every game except the last competition match in First Grade.

In May 1936 Bill Wheeler was selected for a Metropolitan team to play a Combined Newcastle team at Newcastle. The team contained some former international players with a number of promising young players, one of which was Bill Wheeler. The object of the match was to give some of the up and coming players experience at the representative level.

A few days after the Metropolitan v Newcastle match, Bill Wheeler was selected in a Possibles v Probables match that was used as a guide for NSW team selection. He didn't play further representative football but the experience cemented him in Wests First Grade team for the remainder of the season. The photo below was Bill Wheeler's last game in First Grade rugby league.



Bill Wheeler (Wests) being tackled by Viv Thicknesse (Easts) - Truth 16 August 1936

Bill Wheeler played in the trial matches for Wests early in 1937 but did not continue his football career that season. No record has been found of Bill Wheeler playing rugby league from that time on. During his time at Wests, between 1934 and 1936, Bill played twelve First Grade, twelve Reserve Grade and six Third Grade games.

Bill lived at Five Dock until the mid-1950's and then went to live at Epping, NSW. Sometime after 1980 he relocated to Townsville, Queensland where he died in May 1997.