

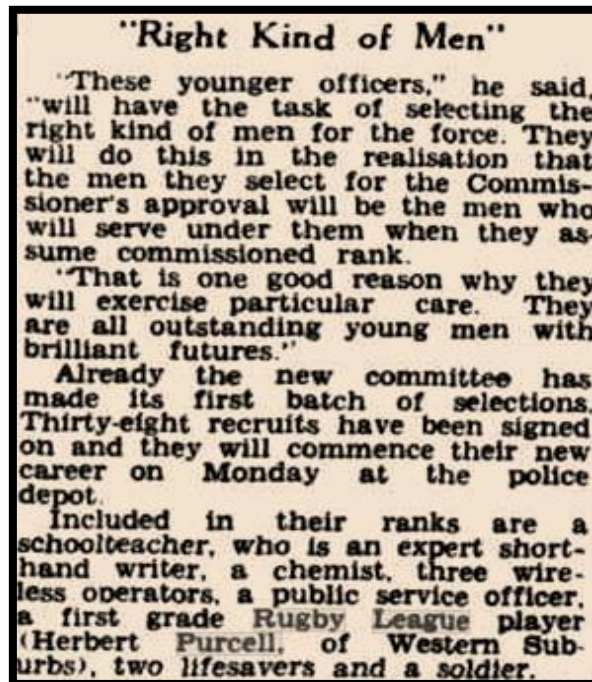
## Bill Purcell

..... was graded with Wests in 1935 and made his First Grade debut against University in round sixteen of that year. Wests Secretary, Jim White, in an interview with the Daily Telegraph in May 1935, described Bill Purcell, who had scored three tries for the Reserve Grade team on the previous Saturday, as a second (Ray) Hines.

Bill was with Wests again in 1936 but did not live up to earlier expectations and was a regular in Reserve Grade that season. He was listed in the Wests First Grade team in the pre-season trials of 1937 but there is no record of him playing in the competition that year.

It is not known why Bill did not play in 1937 but in January of that year, the NSW Police Commissioner MacKay announced sweeping reforms to the NSW Police as a result of the recent criticism of the Force.

One of the initiatives was to establish a recruitment committee to search for the "right kind of men" needed by the Police. The Committee was comprised of an Inspector, two Sargents and three junior officers. Bill Purcell was one of the junior officers on the Committee and it is likely that his new duties came before playing football.



Newcastle Sun 9 January 1937

Bill Purcell's time on the recruitment committee must have been short lived as he was back playing with Wests in 1938 and also undertaking active Police work in the inner City. He rejoined Wests mid-season, played one Third Grade and one Reserve Grade game, before playing the last seven games in First Grade.

In November 1938 the Labor Daily newspaper reported that; "Police winger Bill Purcell will play with Eastern Suburbs Rugby League Club next season." However in March 1939 it was reported in the Daily News that;

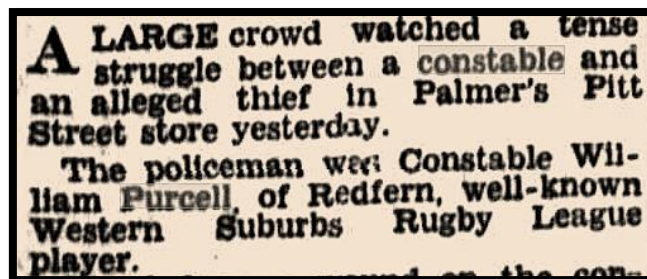
"Fourteen stone rugby league winger, Bill Purcell is back with Western Suburbs. A fortnight ago Purcell played in a trial with Eastern Suburbs. Purcell thought that he was qualified for Eastern Suburbs but

West's Secretary, Mr E. E. McFayden informed him that he had been out of the district for only several months, and he must play for West's."

The residential qualification rule required a player to live in a district for twelve months before he could play for the corresponding district team. There is no record of Bill Purcell playing for Eastern Suburbs in a competition game.

Bill played the first five games of the 1939 season in First Grade with West's and then another three games in Reserve Grade. He played no further grade rugby league after that. During his time with West's he played thirteen First Grade, twenty four Reserve Grade and seven Third Grade games. He scored twenty six tries in all grades for a tally of seventy eight points.

Bill Purcell was initially based at the Redfern Police Station. There was a news report in November 1938 when he conducted an arrest of a shop lifter. Unfortunately the accused was a pugilist who gave Bill Purcell some difficulty during the arrest. The report also acknowledges that the Constable was West's winger Bill Purcell.



Bill Purcell also worked at the Darlinghurst Police Station in one of the State's toughest Police districts. One incident that was before the Court in 1941 resulted in the accused claiming that; "the coppers gave me a lacing." and that "Constable (Ray) Stehr was present."

Constable H.W. Purcell who was present at the interview was questioned and denied that Constable Stehr was present, as alleged by the defence. Bill Purcell in response to a question by the Defence, said that he was an athlete and a footballer.

It is evident that Ray Stehr and Bill Purcell were work colleagues and this was possibly the reason that Bill Purcell was enticed to Eastern Suburbs in 1938, which ultimately failed due to the residential qualification rules.

In 1949 Bill Purcell was recognised for his Police work. Constable 1st Class H. W. Purcell and his partner A. Strachan were the recipients of the George Lewis Trophy for the bravest act of 1948. Both took part in the arrest of a criminal whom they overpowered while the criminal was heavily armed, after a chase of many miles.

By the early 1950's, Bill Purcell had been promoted to Detective Senior Constable and was working with the C. I. B. He was involved with a number of high profile cases including the arrest of the notorious Darcy Dugan.



Constables Strachan and Purcell receiving the George Lewis Trophy - 1949

Bill Purcell lived most of his later life in the northern Sydney suburb of Castlecrag, where he died in August 1994.