

Brief History of Rugby in the Duke of Wellingtons Regiment 1877 to 2006

In 1877 Halifax became the Depot for the Duke of Wellingtons Regiment (West Riding of Yorkshire) and records state that it also saw the birth of rugby within the Regiment.

1895 saw the creation of Rugby League, at an inaugural meeting in Huddersfield, and this form of the game was mostly played by the working classes of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cumberland.

In those early days Dukes rugby was essentially rugby league but quickly the Regiment attracted not only the Yorkshire Rugby League boys but also young Rugby Union playing officers from all over the country. The 2nd Battalion was the initiator of serious rugby in the Regiment for, when in South Africa between 1893 and 1896 they won the two open challenge competitions. The Battalion were subsequently posted to India where they won the Calcutta Cup (the premier competition at that time) between 1903 and 1905. Shortly after the 1st Battalion were posted to the sub continent and between 1906 and 1914 were the dominant team and between 1904 and 1914 they won the Madras Cup six times, the Bombay Cup six times and the Calcutta Cup nine times. In recognition of their success, the Calcutta Rugby Club presented the Battalion with the Club Cup. Back in the UK in 1907 the 2nd Battalion won the inaugural Army Cup, the principal rugby football competition in the Army.

ARMY CUP (Union)

To this day the Dukes still hold the record for the number of Army Cup wins with 14 victories and 8 times loosing finalists. The winning years were: 1907, 1914, 1931, 1933, 1958, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1972, 1975, 1978, 1979, 1981.

Of course to win the overall Army Cup the Regiment had to win either the UK or BAOR cup, a feat that was achieved on 23 occasions. Probably the most successful era in Dukes Rugby was between 1965 and 1972 during which time they were unbeaten winning the Army Cup 5 times as well as two Far East final wins over the New Zealand Army in Malaya in 1969 and again in Hong Kong 1970.

ARMY CUP (LEAGUE)

The Army Rugby League was founded in 1994. The Dukes won the RL Cup for the first time in 2003 and a further 6 times from 2006 to 2013 as 3 YORKS (DWR). Although the 3 YORKS was disbanded in 2013 the Regiment still holds the record for the number of victories as well as the record of number of successes in the Rugby League '9s' competition.

ARMY 7-a-SIDE RUGBY.

From 1965 to the early 1980's the Regiment remained unbeaten in all service 7-a-side tournaments in both BAOR and the UK. The Dukes won the inaugural all Army 7s Tournament held at Aldershot in 1975 and continued this dominance annually to 1980.

NORTHERN IRELAND 1957 to 1959.

During this tour the Battalion played rugby across the province. Before completion of the tour the Dukes were invited to play the Ulster XV at Ravenhill. Under the Captaincy of David Gilbert Smith the Dukes won 19 points to 8.

JAPAN TOUR 1969.

Whilst serving in Hong Kong, the Regimental Rugby team had the honour to represent Great Britain as part of the British week celebrations held in Tokyo.

INTERNATIONAL HONOURS.

Many Regimental players have been selected to represent the Army and Combined Services, (far too many to mention here). Thirteen Dukes have achieved international honours at both Rugby Union and Rugby League, 9 English, 3 Scottish and 1 Irish.

C W Wilson, England 1907.

Charles (Bull) Faithfull, England 1924-1926.

WF (Horsey) Browne, Ireland, 1925-1928 1937.

C L Troop, England 1933.

F J Reynolds. England 1937.

Mike Campbell- Lamerton, Scotland and British Lions 1959-1966.

Lt Grieve, Scotland and British Lions 1935- 1938.

David Gilbert Smith, Scotland 1952.

Dennis Shuttleworth, England 1951-1953.

Mike Hardy, England 1951-1953.

Brian Curry, GB RL 1956.

Norman Field GB RL 1963.

Charlie Renilson GB RL 1965-1968.

Arthur Keegan GB RL 1966-1969.

Both Mike Campbell- Lamerton and Arthur Keegan were Captain of the British Lions (New Zealand) and Great Britain (Australia) respectively in 1966.