

## 1 PWRR Rugby Training Camp to the South East of England

By Lieutenant Chris Tresize

On the 1st September, 1 PWRR mounted transport and started the journey across the continent headed for 3 PWRR, Leros Barracks. It was the Rugby team's first opportunity to get together as a squad and begin training for the coming season in the British Army Germany (BA(G)) league. With many of the older, bolder (and larger!) Fijians moving on from the Armed Forces, this was an opportunity to build a new team with some of the younger members of the Battalion. Making full use of the 5 SCOTS rugby pitch at Howe Barracks, the team worked on set piece and structure on the Monday, before playing their first match against Folkestone RFC. Their well-drilled team that had a strong forward pack proved too much for our front row throughout this match, resulting in little clean ball being available for our backs. Of note, Capt Oli Keith stepped up to loose head prop and packed down against a scrum machine for his first time just before the match! 1 PWRR showed great passion and character in this game in front of a large home crowd and against a far more drilled and slick team. Capt Cherry, LCpl Vermulen, Pte Rokotoloko and Pte Butadroka played incredibly well to gain some good yardage against Folkestone and we went over the line twice - proof we are capable of playing some good rugby. The final score 24-12 to Folkestone was impressive after 1 day of training.

The following day saw the team travel to Newbury on a perfectly clear and sunny day, to play in the Army Rugby 10's tournament. Carrying plenty of knocks and bruises from the previous night, we were looking forward to our first match against the School of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering. A settled and relaxed game plan worked in our favour resulting in a 35-0 win for the Tigers. We could not sit back and relax however as the other 3 matches in our group were against some of the best rugby teams in the Army set up. 1 YORKS (who went on to win the tournament), 3 SCOTS and 4 RA inevitably beat us due to far greater structure, time training together and their squads' strength in depth. In the process the Tigers squad carried through a few more bumps and bruises.



Captains exchange plaques before the Maidstone match



The Thursday was a rest day for the squad and they were treated to a cultural tour of the Garden of England. This began with watching WO1 (RSM) Jackson, 3 PWRR, in the turning of the page ceremony in Canterbury Cathedral and visiting the Regimental museum at Dover Castle.



**Pte Bukalidi makes a break to score a try during the Army Rugby 10's tournament**



**Capt Keith and Lee linking up during the Army rugby 10's tournament in Newbury**

Friday was more build up play in preparation for Saturday's match against Maidstone Rugby Club. Unfortunately for us, it turned out to be the same story as with the previous fixtures. Maidstone were a well drilled team, having been playing pre-season rugby for 8 weeks, who had masses of depth to their team. Their forwards proved tough competition for our front row, meaning we lacked a platform once more. In the first play our fly half, Pte Rokotoloko picked up an injury to his knee ruling him out for the rest of the match. A re-jig had to happen and with minimal manning in our squad on the bench, we were already struggling. The eventual score was 52-7 to Maidstone. The opposition was incredibly complimentary of our will to fight all the way to the final whistle and our fitness throughout as in the final 20 minutes of the game we were giving them the run around and they could not keep up with our pace. A well deserved team social occurred in Canterbury that night and our tour guide was CO 3 PWRR, Lt Col Baynam who showed us the sights!



**Post match celebrations at Maidstone rugby Club.**

Clearly this was not The 1st Battalion's week for success. We had to take pain with inexperienced players coming through the ranks but it was better that this was done now than later. We showed great passion for the cap badge, re-affirmed our ties to the recruiting area, exchanging plaques with both civilian teams and leaving The Tiger journal at both locations. The players played extremely well and showed great courage and desire against bigger and better opponents in most matches. A good platform was built from which to continue the team's development, with players who weren't on this training camp and which will help make all the difference during the remainder of the season in Germany.

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