

More Interesting Facts

Welch or Welsh – What is in a name?

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WHAT'S IN A NAME

Welch or Welsh

The spelling of Welsh or Welch in the titles of the former regiments does need an explanation. In 1702, when the Welsh designation was granted to 23rd Foot, the spelling 'Welch' was in common usage, but this was swept away during the latter half of the nineteenth-century by 'Welsh'. In February 1831, a letter was received from Horse Guards directing the 41st Foot to style themselves as 'The 41st, or The Welch Regiment of Infantry'. It would appear that on official publications the spelling varied between 'c' and 's' although both regiments stuck resolutely to the old spelling.

Matters came to a head in the Great War, when cap badges were produced for the Royal Welch Fusiliers and the Welch Regiment showing 'Welsh'. Once the war was over, it was generally agreed within the two regiments that the traditional spelling was more correct. Consequently, the two Colonels, Lieutenant-General Sir Francis Lloyd and Major-General Sir Thomas Lloyd made application to the Army Board for the re-instatement of the spelling 'Welch'. Official approval for 'Welch' was received from the War Office on 27th January 1920.

This explanation does not however answer the question as to why 'Welsh' is used in the title of the new regiment 'The Royal Welsh'. The assumption is that the Royal Welch Fusiliers were always colloquially referred to as 'The Royal Welch' and some difference was necessary to set the new regiment apart from one of its antecedents. Also 'Welsh' is in common usage, any mis-spellings would be minimised.