



## King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry

The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (KOYLI) was a light infantry regiment of the British Army. It officially existed from 1881 to 1968, but its predecessors go back to 1755. In 1968 the regiment was amalgamated with the Somerset and Cornwall Light Infantry, the King's Shropshire Light Infantry and the Durham Light Infantry to form The Light Infantry which in turn was merged with the Devonshire and Dorset Regiment, the Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment and the Royal Green Jackets to become The Rifles in 2007.

The 53rd Regiment of Foot was raised in Leeds in 1755 and renumbered the 51st in January 1757. In 1782, in common with other regiments of the line, the 51st was given a "county" designation, becoming the 51st (2nd Yorkshire, West Riding) Regiment of Foot. The title of *Light Infantry* was given in honour of its former commander General Sir John Moore in 1809, and in 1821 the regiment was given royal status when *King's Own* was added to its title, becoming the 51st (2nd Yorkshire, West Riding, The King's Own Light Infantry) Regiment.

### ***The 105th Foot***

The 2nd Madras European Light Infantry was raised by the British East India Company in 1839. In 1861 East India Company forces were absorbed into the British Army, and the regiment became the 105th (Madras Light Infantry) Regiment.<sup>[1]</sup> In 1878, the 105th was moved to Pontefract, where the KOLI already also had their depot.

### ***The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry***

In 1881 after the Cardwell and Childers Reforms, regimental numbers were abolished. The 51st King's Own Light Infantry became the 1st Battalion, King's Own Light Infantry (South Yorkshire Regiment) and the 105th became its 2nd Battalion. The Childers Reforms also combined Militia and rifle volunteer units into the regiments formed in 1881. Accordingly, the 1st West Yorkshire Rifles Militia became the 3rd Militia Battalion, while the 3rd Administrative Battalion West Riding of Yorkshire Rifle Volunteer Corps became the 1st Volunteer Battalion. In 1897 the regimental title was changed to the King's Own (Yorkshire Light Infantry) and in 1921 to the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.<sup>[2]</sup>

With the creation of the Territorial Force in 1908, the 1st Volunteer Battalion was reorganised as the 4th and 5th Battalions (TF), while the 3rd Battalion was transferred to the Special Reserve. The

KOYLI was raised to thirteen battalions during World War I, and nine during World War II, including not only infantry but anti-aircraft and armoured units as well. During World War II the battalions served in all three fronts (Europe, North Africa and Asia-Pacific).<sup>[3]</sup> In 1948, 1 KOYLI was disbanded and 2 KOYLI was renamed 1 KOYLI. In 1968, 1 KOYLI became the 2nd Battalion of The Light Infantry (2LI). In 2007 the LI merged with the Devonshire and Dorset Regiment, the Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment, and the Royal Green Jackets to form a new large regiment, The Rifles. The former 1 KOYLI battalion (now 1LI) became '5 RIFLES'.

### ***History***

The 51st first saw action during the Seven Years' War, gaining a reputation at Minden, its first battle honour. In 1803 it served in the first Kandyan War in Major-General Hay Macdowall's division. The regiment embarked for the Peninsula in 1807, serving with distinction. The regiment served on the extreme right at Waterloo, and was engaged at Hougomont Farm. Both the 51st and 105th saw extensive service all over the Empire throughout the nineteenth century; the Second battalion (105th) fought well in the South African War.

### ***World War 1***

Both regular battalions served on the Western Front in World War I, as well as three Territorial Force and eight volunteer service battalions of the New Army raised by Lord Kitchener.

