

The Navy played a significant part in introducing the game of rugby to the colonies during the nineteenth century, as the history of the Rugby Football Union (England) records.

It is a fact that the first rugby game played in Auckland was staged at Albert Barracks on 11 June 1870, between HMA Rosario and a team of Auckland citizens. The Rosario team played three matches in Auckland and one in Wellington, which according to the records gave a great stimulus to the game in New Zealand. From 1870 onwards matches were played regularly by HMS Ships ESK, Fawn, Harrier, Pandora and Rosario at Devonport.

In 1890 a meeting between the Pirates RFC (believed to be Navy players) and the North Shore Rugby Club agreed to the Club combining with North Shore. They first played for North Shore in 1891 which enabled a senior team to be entered into the ARU competition.

In 1933 Navy played against an Auckland junior representative team and won 23-3. Also in 1933, HMS Diomedes combined with North Shore. Some Navy players were: Ron Marshall, Sel Speight, Danny Fitzgerald, Tim Woodham and Roy Coburn.

In 1938 and 1939 HMS Ships Achilles and Leander affiliated with North Shore and played as Ship teams in the Senior reserves competition. Marine T Webb of HMS Leander was an Auckland Rep in 1938 and was also an All Black reserve.

In 1940 HMS Achilles was affiliated with North Shore and played Senior Reserves but withdrew after the first round due to war commitments. In 1941 and 1942 Navy were not involved in Auckland Rugby again due to war commitments.

1943 was the year that the present Navy RFC was formed and teams were entered in the Senior 1st Division and Junior Grade. Auckland Senior A Reps were Des Barchard and Brian Waldegrave. 1944 and 1945 saw Navy still in Senior 1st Division, also fielding teams in the Junior Grades. Des Barchard and Brian Waldegrave were still Auckland Reps and were also North Island Reps in 1945. Ex Navy Members to become All Blacks were Tommy Webster 1947 and Roy Roper 1949/1950.

1946 to 1948 were lean years for the Navy RFC. With the de-mobilisation of wartime members, Navy were unable to field Senior teams and only had one team in the Junior Grades.

1949 saw a resurgence by Navy. Teams fielded were Senior 2nd Division, 2nd Grade (sections A and C) and a 3rd Grade team. In 1950 Navy fielded the same teams, won the Jordan Rose Bowl and were 2nd in the Pater Mackie Trophy. In 1951 saw no changes to teams fielded. 1952 and 1953 saw Navy in the Senior C competition and in 1952 were joint winners with Cornwall for the Jordan Rose Bowl.

1954 - 1956 again saw Navy in the Senior A competition and Munga Emery was an Auckland A and a NZ Maori Rep.

Navy had its largest ever contribution to the Auckland A Rep team. Munga Emery, Ron Berghan, Al Cameron, Rata Harrison and Russ Blockley. 1959-62 Navy still played in the Senior A competition, Munga still an Auckland Rep in 1959, Rata Harrison in 1960 and Jum Marshall in 1962.

Navy won the 1963 Senior B Pollard Cup competition and in 1964 Commander Bob Paul was elected a vice-President of the ARU, a position he held until 1969.

1964-1969 Navy remained in the Senior B and each year keenly contesting promotion/relegation to Senior A. In 1966 Navy again won the Pollard Cup and in 1969 Geoff Andrews was an Auckland A Rep. In 1965 two Navy Players, Paul Tainui and Horman Tapsell played against the Springboks for the combined Wanganui/King Country team.

Through 1970 – 1974 Navy remained in the Senior B but experience some lean years.

1975 – 1978 saw Navy up and down between Senior Division 2 and Division 3, due to key players leaving the service or being on ships overseas. In 1977 the 6th Grade team won their championship, winning the Whittcombe Shield. In 1978 Buck Shelford was a NZ Colts Rep.

1979-1981 saw Navy again in Senior Division and still re-building.

KINGS CUP WON BY NAVY

In September 1947, the three Services (Navy, Army and Air) took part in a Rugby tournament for the first time in NZ.

The tournament has been played annually since, except for 1951. Navy was the winner of the first tournament, winning the Kings Cup.

The Kings Cup was donated by the Army for this annual tournament. The Cup was originally presented by King George V for competition between serving forces in the UK during the Winter of 1918-1919.

NZ Army won this Cup after beating Royal Air Force, Canadian Forces and Mother Country.

In 1952 and annually since a NZ Combined Services team has been selected on completion of the annual inter-services tournament. This team has each year played first class matches against various New Zealand provincial representative teams.

A continuing problem for the NAVY RFC is the loss of players to ships that go overseas. Often some ships have several Navy Senior players in their rugby team and they have impressive records in matches overseas.

HMNZS Bellona / HMNZS Royalist – in 1955 a cruiser HMNZS Bellona was returned to the UK and a modernised cruiser HMNZS Royalist was brought to NZ. The Ships crew were based at Plymouth (England) for nine months during the UK Winter.

The team contained nine Navy Senior Players and was coached by the Navy Senior Coach – Jim Dobbyn.

The team had an impressive record playing many top English and Welsh Clubs in South West UK. The highlight of their matches was a game against Cardiff on the Arms Park, a match lost 40 – 10. Such was the strength of Cardiff that year (1956) that this team was the only team to score double points against them.

Their playing record was:

Played	29
Won	19
Drew	1
Lost	9
Points For:	510
Points Against:	241

