

# 'Making Aerial History.'

## King William's College flies to Belfast.

On 27th October 1936 the First XV flew to Belfast for a rugby match against Campbell College. This must surely have been the first time that a school rugby team flew to a fixture, and the team therefore achieved a unique distinction in sporting history.

Air communication had been established four years earlier between the Isle of Man and the 'adjacent islands', and the College was very interested in exploiting this innovation. At the time flying was obviously quicker, more comfortable and much cheaper than surface transport, despite the element of danger.

Two planes were chartered from Blackpool and West Coast Air Services to carry the team and a few spectators. The flight to Belfast was made in the morning, the match played before lunch and the party returned in the afternoon. The team would only be absent from the school for seven hours, whereas three days would have been needed to travel by boat.

On the day the weather turned out to be anything but inviting. A strong, westerly wind was blowing, and the conditions were so bad that it was at first doubtful whether the crossing could be made.

Fortunately weather conditions improved by 10 o'clock, and the school watched the planes leave. The first plane to depart carried the Principal, Messrs Bolter and O'Grady, Major Henderson, Mr Harley Cunningham, Mr GP Alder and PW Long. The second plane was a "DH 86" 18 seater which carried Mr Christal, GWH Dean as touch judge, and the following team: RGJ Peever, RG Payne, GN Burton, JJ Christian, DP Ridsdale, PH Chambers, J Hemmingway, MS Fraser, HC Chambers, CW Pakenham, RGB Cordiner, RF Jackson, TDH McMeekin, SA Grant and CES Place.

The sea crossing was made at low altitude, Mr Christal reported to the press upon his return that "below we had occasional glimpses of waves mounting high in the Irish Sea, whipped to white fury by the strong gale," In Belfast the party huddled together in the piercing wind whilst the photograph below was taken, after which they travelled to Campbell College by coach. College lost the match 3 – 14 and left for the airport after lunch. The return flight was far quicker with the "DH 86" establishing a new record time of 22 minutes between Belfast and Ronaldsway.

Seven hours after leaving, the team returned to the College facing prep. after a memorable trip.



The 1936 1st XV and supporters in front of the De Havilland 86 Dragon 'Express' which flew the team to Belfast.

An extract from The Barrovian

KWC 3 – Campbell College 14

Playing with the slope and the wind in their favour, KWC opened strongly, the forwards being prominent. Peever, leading the forwards broke away quickly twice, but had too far to go. When Campbell attacked, KWC defended resolutely, their backs tackling well. Though at first beaten in the tight, King William's were now beginning to get more of the ball, but good three quarter movements made little headway against a quick covering defence. Campbell College now began to press, and eventually, after a loose maul near the line, score an unconverted try. KWC replied with a fine movement in which the ball went along the three quarter line and back, but just failed to get over, while, later, an unlucky bounce of the ball, with the defence beaten, prevented a likely score. In the second half, King William's began strongly, and a three quarter movement nearly put Ridsdale over. From the ensuing scrum the ball was forced over the Campbell line and touched down for an unconverted try. The Campbell backs tried hard to regain the lead, but held off until a loose pass enabled them to dribble over for an unconverted try. For the next 10 minutes they kept KWC penned in their own half, and their three quarters by good moves, scored two more tries, one converted. College then attacked again and Peever nearly scored, but the whistle soon blew for full time, leaving the score Campbell College 14, KWC 3.