

David Tennant Cowan (1896-1983)

Major General GOC 17<sup>th</sup> Indian Division 1942-45

Cowan may have ranked below full Generals produced by Reading School but his record as a soldier was quite exceptional.



'Punch' Cowan was a career soldier, commissioned into the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. During World War One he won the Military Cross and was Mentioned in Despatches. In 1917 he transferred to the Indian Army and served in the Afghan War and both Waziristan Campaigns (earning two further Mentions in Despatches). By 1939 he was the Commanding Officer of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 6<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Rifles and, after a period as a General Staff Officer, he then fought in Burma, during World War Two, longer than any other senior soldier, commanding his division, the 17<sup>th</sup> Indian, with conspicuous success and winning a bar to his existing DSO at Imphal.

After the war, he was the General Officer Commanding the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan for 2 years before his retirement from the army in 1947.

At School he had been a prominent member of both the 1<sup>st</sup> XI and 1<sup>st</sup> XV just before World War One. He was a hockey player of international standard and became an organiser of the Indian Olympic Teams which won the gold medals in the 1932 and 1936 Games. In 1958 he was Commandant of the Empire Village for the 6<sup>th</sup> British Empire and Commonwealth Games.

Major General Cowan was President of the OR Club in 1960 and a Deputy Lieutenant for Devonshire from 1953 to 1963.