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HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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Volume X Number 1

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THE SHEET ANCHOR

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(Although making every effort to ensure that the information contained in this publication is correct, the RMHS stress that any opinions expressed in submitted articles are solely those of the author concerned).

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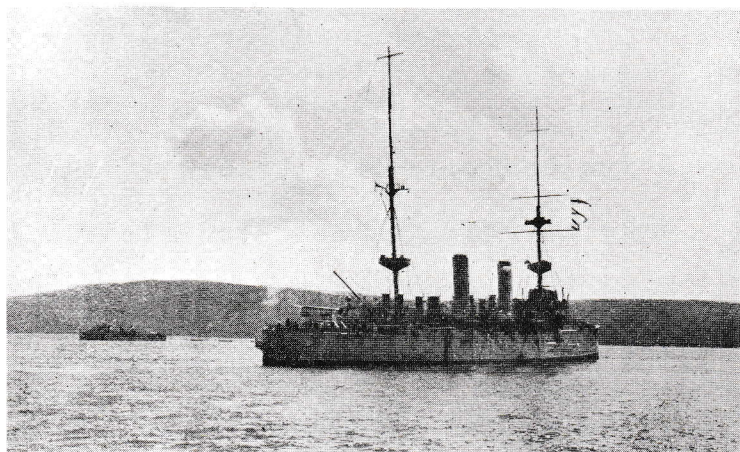
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OPERATIONS AT AKABA (PART 2)

By Lieutenant Colonel G R Hawkins OBE RM

In a previous edition of the Sheet Anchor I described the operations carried out by HMS MINERVA against the Turks at Akaba, when the Ottoman Empire entered the war on the side of Germany in November 1914.

Akaba is a very small port at the head of the gulf of that name in the Red Sea. Its importance lies in the fact that it is only 40 miles from Maan the Turkish garrison town, which would be the main base for a Turkish force attacking Egypt.



*HMS MINERVA, a Protected Cruiser
launched 1896. (Chatham)
5600 tons; 19.5 knots; 11 x 6 inch,
9 x 12 and 7 x 3 pounder guns.*

Captain Warleigh the Commanding Officer was well satisfied with the part played by his ship. The Turkish fort and barracks had been destroyed; and the port cleared of Turkish troops and irregulars; this had been accomplished without suffering any casualties ourselves. He was disappointed, however, because the seaplane lent to the ship by the French Air Squadron at Suez had been unable to fly over the coastal hills north of Akaba. These hills could screen from view large concentrations of the enemy, and the only way of seeing beyond them was from the air; they were 5000 feet high in places, this altitude was proving beyond the capability of the frail 1914 aircraft.

The burning question was "What was going on beyond that granite curtain?" Intelligence reports from Cairo began to arrive thick and fast. Reliable information was received that the enemy was massing on the Hedjaz railway near Maan, with the intention of striking across Sinai to the Suez Canal. This emphasised the importance of Akaba, which the Turks must not be allowed to occupy. No British troops in Egypt could be spared, they were all earmarked for the defence of the Suez Canal. Therefore the task of denying this port to the enemy was thrust upon the Royal Navy. For this purpose an Akaba Patrol was formed consisting of HMS MINERVA, and two Basilisk destroyers HMS FOXHOUND and HMS MOSQUITO; the ships took turns watching Akaba, then carried out patrolling duties. When HMS MINERVA was relieved the opportunity was taken to go to Suez to change the seaplane which had failed to get the height required. The French Squadron lent us another seaplane for a further attempt, this time it was piloted by Lieutenant Ross RE. He managed to climb higher than the previous French pilot, but not high enough, and had to return because his petrol was running very low.

The constant pressure which was maintained by the Royal Navy caused the Turks to infiltrate rifle men, machine guns, and light artillery into concealed positions to take pot shots at the ships. This put an end to football on the beach!

The weather in the gulf was extremely hot, especially at night when the dead lights, which kept the light in, kept the fresh air out. It became popular to sleep above the mess deck, until a Turkish gun which was silent by day, became very noisy at night. Shrapnel shells whistling overhead put an end to sleeping on deck!

Life on board was never dull. The gunnery officer Lieutenant Bruce Fraser (later "Fraser of North Cape") kept the officers busy at the spotting table, and the gun's crews pushing practice shells weighing 100 pounds, through the 6 inch loader. If he had wanted an excuse for all this training he had a good one. We were very near to the Indian Ocean where the two German cruisers EMDEN and KONIGSBERG were operating. With any luck we might be able to test our 6 inch British guns against the later 4.1 guns of the Germans.

When 'Guns' was not exercising the Royal Marines in the 'Per Mare' part of their duties, Captain Snepp reminded them there was a 'Per Terram' side. Any available time was spent on rifle training, aiming, snap shooting, and rapid fire at an eye disc.

He was also convinced we needed instruction in giving fire orders, so we practised on objects ashore visible from the ship. He claimed that during a previous landing he heard a marine bawl out "There's a B..... behind that rock"; The OC Detachment said "That is not sufficiently explicit".

Captain Stirling, the observer, was with us whenever we had an aircraft. He was a great asset during our landings because he spoke both Turkish and Arabic. He watched our training on deck and appeared to be very interested in Royal Marines, this interest was not one sided: the marines were interested in Captain Stirling because he wore the ribbon for the DSO and two for the South African war. He had served in the Dublin Fusiliers.

Captain Snepp having observed Captain Stirling's interest in the Royal Corps persuaded him to give a talk to us about "Tactics in the Boer War", and in an interesting and amusing way he gave us one of the best talks on "Fieldcraft" we were ever likely to hear.

Early in December a number of large packages arrived marked "To be distributed on Christmas Day". The ship's company wondered what these packages contained. The question was solved on Christmas morning when everybody received a parcel from Buckingham Palace. The present was a tin of chocolates from Princess Mary. I still have the tin of mine, but the contents have long since been a memory! Embossed in the centre of the lid is a picture of the Princess, and round the rim the names of all the Allies, Imperium Britannium, Belgium, France, Serbia, Montenegro, Russia and Japan. This list of nations who were in

at the start is interesting. The list of those who were not is of equal interest. The United States of America is the most important of the nine who came in later.

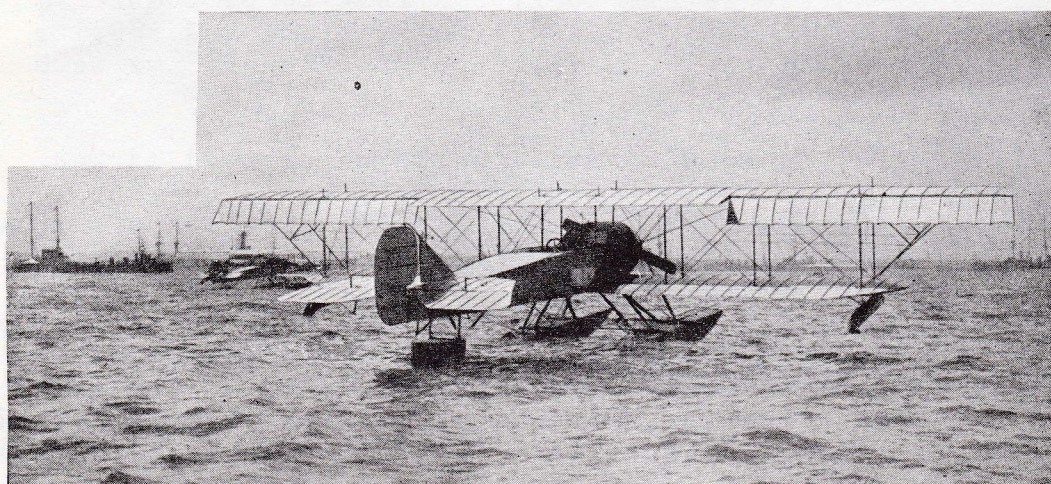
Towards the end of December we were relieved from patrol duties and arrived at Suez. A collier was waiting to fill our coal bunkers. One of the few 'perks' of serving in the tropics in a coal burning ship was that you could watch others humping the heavy sacks of coal, which in cooler climates the ship's company would manhandle.

There were long faces when the Paymaster reported that we had run out of postage stamps. Did this mean we could not send letters? The faces became smiling ones when it was announced that letters AND parcels could be sent unstamped marked "OHMS". The sending of parcels became a ramp: dozens were sent containing Turkish Delight and such like articles when the cost of postage would otherwise have discouraged the sender.

We left Suez on the 29th December with the canteen re-stocked, the beef screen filled with fresh meat, and a stock of bread and fresh vegetables. The MINERVA was launched in 1895 and had no 'mod cons' such as refrigerators. The fresh food would not last long then we would be back to corned beef, salt port (the date on the barrel indicated that it had been in brine for 40 years, it ought to have been soaked in fresh water another 40 years to make it edible) and ship's biscuits, many full of weevils.

The last thing to arrive on board was another Hydro-Avion kindly loaned by the French Navy. The pilot was a very cheery Quartermaster, a Breton named Grall. The Royal Marines were delighted to see that the observer was none other than our old friend Captain Stirling.

The MINERVA steamed through the gulf of Akaba and we all waited developments. We had not long to wait. When hands were called on New Year's Eve both Grall and Captain Stirling were already busy on the seaplane. They evidently meant to get over the hills this time, rifles and revolvers were discarded to lighten the load, and they only took one water bottle between them.



A typical Seaplane in use with the RN early in WW1

In the barracks (Marines mess deck) it was clear that something was going on. Captain Snepp sent for the Sergeant Major before breakfast, and Stripey was still unshaven!

On his return the Sergeant Major put the marines in the picture. When the aircraft had given the 'All clear' Captain Snepp would land on the Sinai side, to reconnoitre the area of Wadi Araba, which was partly hidden by a ridge of sand hills. He intended to move at the best speed, and all would be back on board by seven bells. (rum issue time!)

The party would be as small as possible; Captain Snepp, an orderly, a signaller and four marksmen. There would be no NCOs.

(The Wadi Araba is part of the great rift which starts from Lake Huleh and the sea of Galilee, passes through the Jordan Valley and Dead Sea, and runs right down through Kenya to the heart of Africa).

The first item of the day's work was getting out the seaplane. The pilot and observer having already occupied their seats, and signalled 'Ready' the plane was hoisted out and lowered gently on the water. The engine started first time, which was a good omen; the plane taxied up the gulf and was soon airborne. After circling round it turned and flew over the ship; Captain Stirling gave a friendly wave, and then the plane flew up the Wadi Araba.

Captain Snepp with his eyes glued to his binoculars watched carefully for signals - there were none, it was safe to land.

The plane started to climb at a steeper angle, it continued to climb until it was a mere speck.

In the meantime Captain Snepp ordered the landing party to board the boat, and away they went. On landing two marines were sent ahead to act as scouts, while the signaller followed in rear to keep contact with the ship. When they could no longer be seen from the ship the party was halted for the signaller to catch up, the scouts were pulled back, and all moved forward in a line with Captain Snepp in the centre. At this point he gave permission to broach but not drain water bottles. The advance continued into Wadi Araba. Captain Snepp then saw something on the right about 50 yards away which interested him; as a precaution he drew his revolver from its holster and took Private Ward with him to investigate. The remainder of the party assumed the prone firing position and kept watch, they were glad to get a short rest. It was hot, humid and peaceful. There was nothing alive in sight except flies, and there were swarms of them. The marines watched curiously as Captain Snepp and Ward examined something. What they had seen was obviously of no importance, because they turned round and started to walk back in a casual manner and Captain Snepp returned his revolver to its holster.

Suddenly without any warning all hell broke loose. Rifles from almost all directions opened fire. They were aimed at the backs of the two retiring figures, both of whom were hit in the first burst, and fell to the ground. The Turks continued to fire at these stationary targets, each of whom was hit again several times.

The watching marines were stunned by the turn of events, it took a few seconds for the gravity of the situation to sink in. The dice were heavily loaded against them. They were convincingly outnumbered. They were leaderless. Even the ground was against them; it was like a great amphitheatre, the marines were in the stalls while the Turks occupied the gallery and the boxes, and had the best view.

Instinctively the marines returned the fire, giving their positions away to the enemy, if they were not already aware of them. The result of this was that the Turks transferred their fire from the two casualties to the five marines. A fierce fire fight developed. The five firers were reduced to three when two of them (Privates Keefe and Dean) ignoring the bullets whizzing overhead, crept forward to aid the casualties. It was a miracle that neither of them was hit, and a bitter disappointment to them to find that Ward was either dead or dying, and that Captain Snepp needed much more medical attention than they could give. Keefe suddenly remembered that Ward had 120 rounds of SAA, so he said to Dean "Frank has all his 'ammo', We'll share it, and give it to the Turks", which they did, at the rate of 15 rounds a minute! (later both marines were awarded the DSM).

The fire fight was now at its fiercest, Private Sandy realised that his greatest contribution would be a signal to the ship for help, so he crawled away until it was safe to run.

On board MINERVA whilst they were wondering what was happening ashore, a breathless Private Sandy arrived on the beach, the signal he send was short. "SOS Ambush".

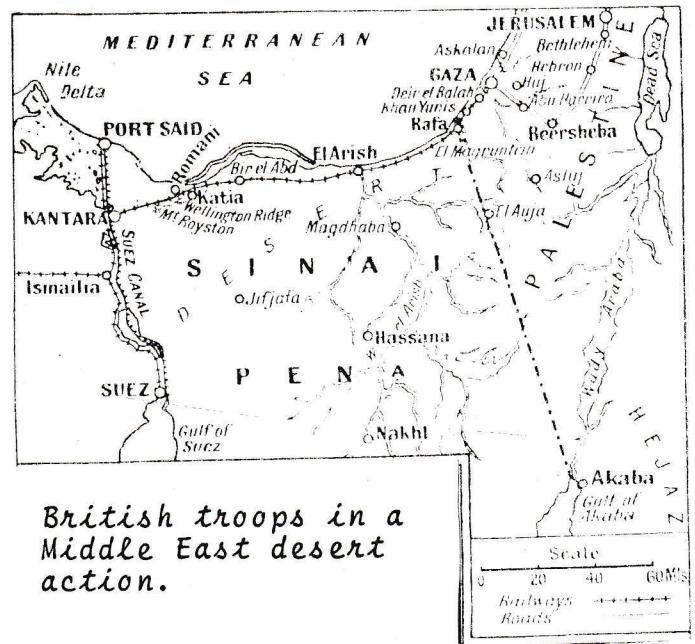
A few minutes later MINERVA opened fire. In the book "Fraser of North Cape" Fraser says "We could not see the enemy so we opened fire on where we thought they were." The shells whistled overhead putting heart into the marines, and the fear of hell into the enemy.

Suddenly there was complete panic in the enemy ranks. They could see something the marines could not see. The landing party led by the Sergeant Major were advancing at speed. Behind them came the seamen with two machine guns led by Lieutenant Fraser. The tables were now turned.

The enemy had no wish to take on another 150 men, and helter skeltered to the rear presenting a splendid target to the marines, who no longer had to husband their ammunition, now they could, and did, blaze away at a rapid rate at an enemy too busy to reply.

By the time the Sergeant Major arrived on the scene with the remainder of the detachment, the Turks who were still on their feet were scampering away in the distance, out of range and almost out of sight.

Finally Lieutenant Fraser and the main body arrived. He decided against persuing the enemy, giving priority to getting the casualties on board.



British troops in a Middle East desert action.

By the time the landing party returned the Surgeon Commander and the sick berth staff had already made preparations for the reception of the casualties. One glance convinced him that Ward was dead, and he must concentrate on Captain Snepp, now unconscious, having lost a lot of blood.

The PMO reported to Captain Warleigh that the Royal Marine Officer should be rushed to a hospital ashore at once, as his chances of survival were no higher than 50/50.

The burial of Private Ward was arranged for 1700 hours, the bosun's mate announced that the ship's company could attend the service in any rig.

The Captain sent for the marines who were ambushed to find out exactly what happened. He expressed his sympathy for the serious wounds of their OC, and for the loss of Private Ward, whom he remembered as the gunlayer who destroyed the Akaba Fort. He congratulated the men on their coolness in fighting their way out of a tight corner, and for inflicting so many casualties on the enemy.

At 1700 hours the ship's bell tolled its mournful dirge; and the ship's company assembled on the quarter deck as for church. When all were seated the Padre (the Rev W E Gordon Jackson) entered reading the funeral service. He was followed by marines carrying on a stretcher the body of Private Ward stitched into his hammock, which was draped with the Union Jack. The prayers were few and short, then all sang the sailors favourite hymn "Eternal Father strong to save".

The Padre gave a signal and the Union Jack was pulled clear; the body was placed on the gang plank with as much tenderness as the marines could manage, and then tilted until it dropped into the sea; a projectile at the foot dragged it to the bottom. Frank Ward rested within sight of the fort he had destroyed.

The firing party fired three volleys in the air, and the buglers sounded the "Last Post". This brought the ceremony to an end.

The fate of the missing pilot and observer now dominated our minds. MINERVA then proceeded up the gulf with all telescopes searching the beaches for Captain Stirling and Grall. The search continued until the light, and our hopes, started to fade. Soon it was pitch black and searchlights were switched on. By this time few expected to see either of the missing men again; nevertheless Captain Warleigh was determined not to give up the search, and MINERVA continued cruising up and down the gulf with searchlights illuminating the beaches. Suddenly there was great excitement. Somebody had spotted Captain Stirling in the beam of the searchlight, soon all of us could see a lone figure on the beach.

A boat was lowered, the crew pulled as though they were racing in the regatta. When Stirling arrived on board he was thirsty, hungry, and exhausted. The Wardroom Officers put that right! Soon he was able to give a full account of how the plane came down 20 miles away, and turned over on landing. He was not hurt but Grall had a broken collar bone and three broken ribs. They progressed three miles in four hours then Grall collapsed. He set off alone dodging Bedouins on camels. He heard guns firing in the gulf and he took cover in one solitary tree as a squadron of Turks passed. In the area where the fight had been, there were a lot of Turks lying about - they were wounded or dead, he did not go close enough to see.

At midnight, for the first time in my life I heard 16 bells struck. It was New Year's Day, 1915 had started.

Captain Warleigh was determined to find Grall and at 6.30 am 150 marines and seamen with a field gun landed under Lieutenant Fraser with orders not to go beyond 10 miles. When this distance was reached the party halted, and the marine bugler sounded various bugle calls, but there was no sign of the pilot. Finding a solitary figure under these conditions was like looking for a lost golf ball on a shingle beach. MINERVA continued to search for Grall. The ship was due to leave for Suez, but Captain Warleigh was determined not to give up yet. His faith was rewarded, shortly after midnight there were faint shouts of "MINERVA", "MINERVA" coming from the shore, and in the beam of **the** searchlight Grall could be seen waving frantically. He got a great welcome when he arrived on board and appeared very touched. Captain Warleigh congratulated him on his grit and determination to get back, and said he deserved his luck. Grall said he saw the search party but thought they were the enemy. He confirmed Stirling's account of a number of Turks lying about where the fight had been, this gave substance to the account of the marines.

In Fraser's book this incident is described as "*A wonderful adventure*". In Stirling's book "*Safety Last*" (Colonel W F Stirling CMG, DSO, MC, published by Hollis & Carter, London) he writes "*Captain Warleigh was very religious, he had a dream that he had seen Grall at the waters edge. He put back to Akaba, switched on searchlights and there was Grall.*"

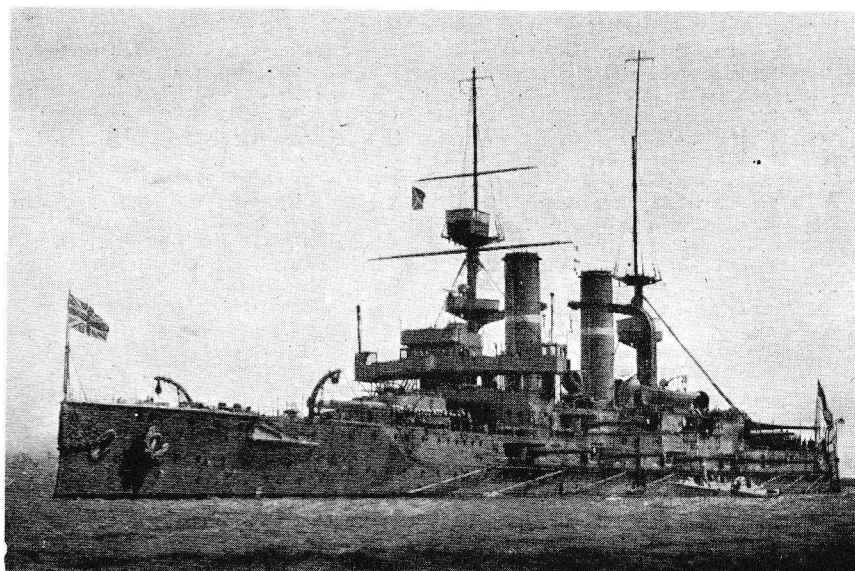
In "*Britain's Sea Soldiers*" the incident is described as "*An illustration of the nature of reconnaissances which may have to be made by Royal Marines afloat*".

As MINERVA was due at Suez the watch on Akaba was left to the destroyers. Both Grall and Captain Stirling got a great send off as they left the ship, Grall to go into hospital, and Stirling to resume his job at Cairo. He was later awarded the MC for his work at Akaba.

MINERVA was now ordered to join the naval force defending Egypt. This consisted of two battleships, HMS TRIUMPH and HMS SWIFTSURE, one at each entrance to the Suez Canal; and seven warships at suitable distances between them. MINERVA's beat was south of the Great Bitter Lake.

The Turkish attack took place between 3rd and 6th February 1915. It was beaten off with ease by the gunfire of the warships.

When the Sinai peninsula was clear of the enemy, and the threat to Egypt removed; the two battleships and MINERVA left for the Dardenelles and Gallipoli operations. One of them, HMS TRIUMPH, was sunk by the German submarine U.21 on the 27th May. She was at action stations at the time shelling enemy trenches; torpedo nets were down and the ship was stationary. It had been believed that the nets would keep out any torpedo, MINERVA was close by also shelling trenches and we saw the ship sink in twelve minutes. The casualties were very high. Many men who jumped into the sea were drowned by the nets when the ship rolled over. It was a very sad sight, and unfortunately was also seen by many of the troops ashore.



HMS TRIUMPH and sister-ship HMS SWIFTSURE were built for Chile (at Barrow) and launched in 1903, but then purchased by Britain. They were lighter than contemporary British battleships, being 11,800 tons with a speed of 20 knots; 4 x 10 inch, 14 x 7.5 inch and 14 x 14 pounder guns.

The Akaba affair occurred 70 years ago, the memory of my generation grows dim; nevertheless I feel sure that as long as I can remember anything, I will remember New Year's Eve 1914, and New Year's Day 1915.

DRESS REGULATIONS - ROYAL MARINES - 1937

The 1908 Equipment illustrated here was in use in the Royal Marines until the new 1937 pattern was introduced about the same time as battledress, early in World War II.

Web Equipment - The inside of flap of haversack and the inside front of cartridge carriers will not be blanched. Web pouches and flaps will be flattened out when wet.

Rifle Sling - End of sling attached to butt swivel will be as close to swivel as brass end will allow.

When the pack is worn the "D's" on the braces will be as close as possible to the shoulder straps on the jacket so as to bring the pack as high as possible.

Rivets between pouches of cartridge carriers, on frog and on entrenching tool carrier will not be polished; they will be blanched in such a manner that they are invisible.

The practice of punching holes in the flaps of the pack and drawing the flaps together with a lace is not permitted.

The waterbottle cork lanyard will be kept clean but will not be blanched white.

The edges of all brasswork, i.e. "D's" and buckles will be rubbed smooth and polished.

Buff Equipment - Both belt and frog will be on the hook on the Tunic. Studs on pouch and frog will be cleaned and free from blanco. Stitching holes will not be pricked out with pencil.

Position of fixed runner on rifle sling:- Top edge of fixed runner will be in line with top edge of magazine (when viewing the rifle at the "order").

Steel Helmet - Buckle of the chin strap will be worn on the left side.

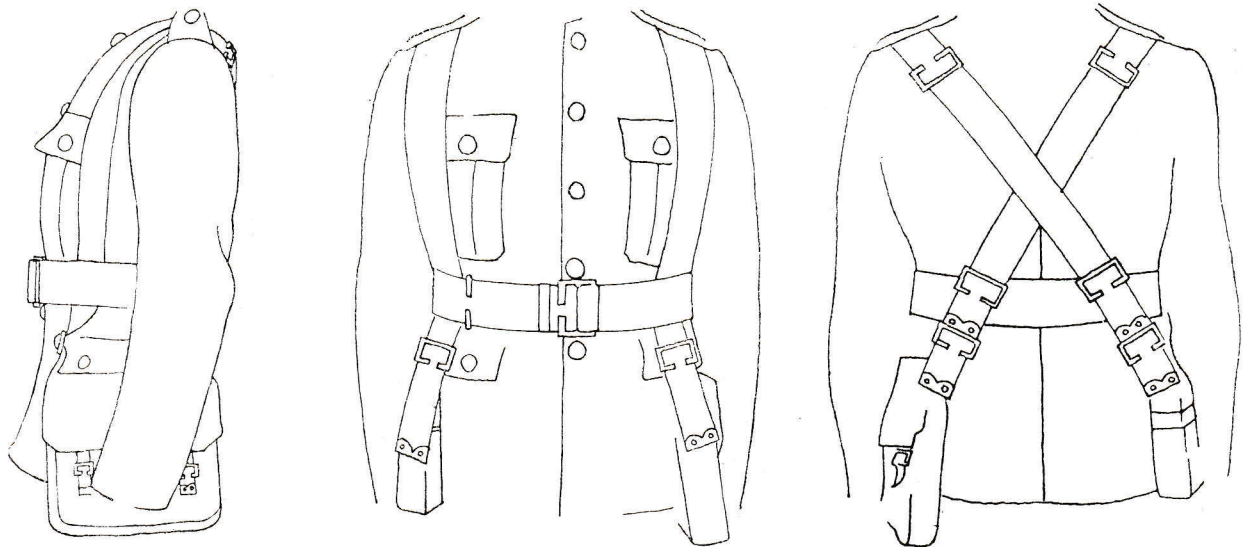
Method of attaching Helmet Bag - Marching Order - When parading for embarkation the helmet bag containing the forage cap will be attached to the supporting strap as close as possible to the left carrier.

Knife Lanyard - The knife lanyard as issued will be worn when parading in marching order. The wearing of the Naval pattern white lanyard is not permitted.

Walking Out Cane - The practice of strapping the walking out cane on the rifle is not permitted.

Sashes - Will be worn in Nos 1, 2, 6 and 7 dress. When worn with the Cloth Tunic, the sash will be fitted under the second button covering the third and fourth buttons. When worn with the Serge Tunic the Sash will cover the second button. It will not be worn outside the greatcoat when on leave. When wearing a sash with a greatcoat, Staff Sergeants will wear it underneath the coat.

Method of Wearing Marching Order—R.M. Band.

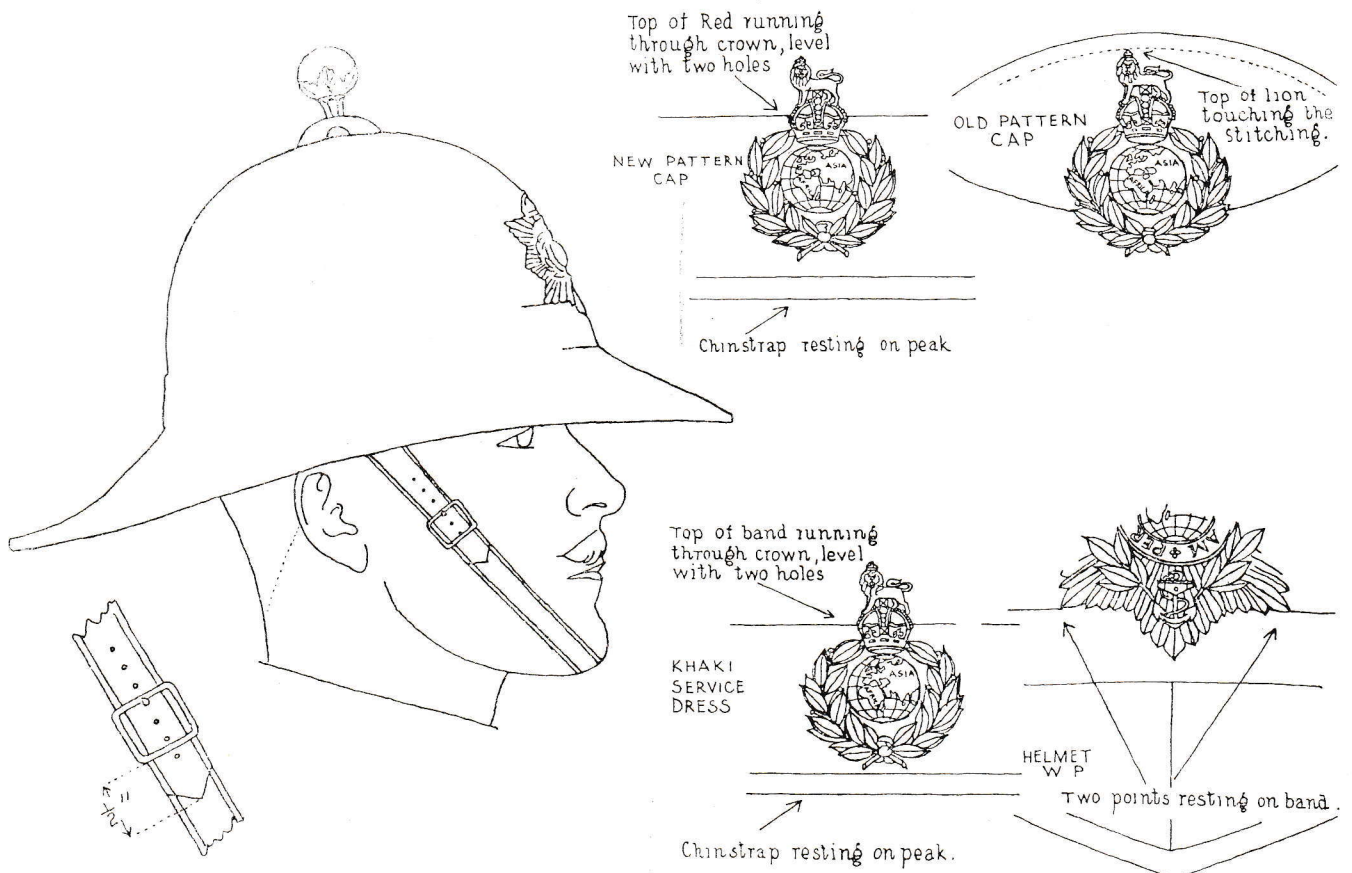


Note:—Braces are not to be crossed in front of the body. They should pass under the waistbelt, the ends being attached to the waterbottle and haversack respectively.

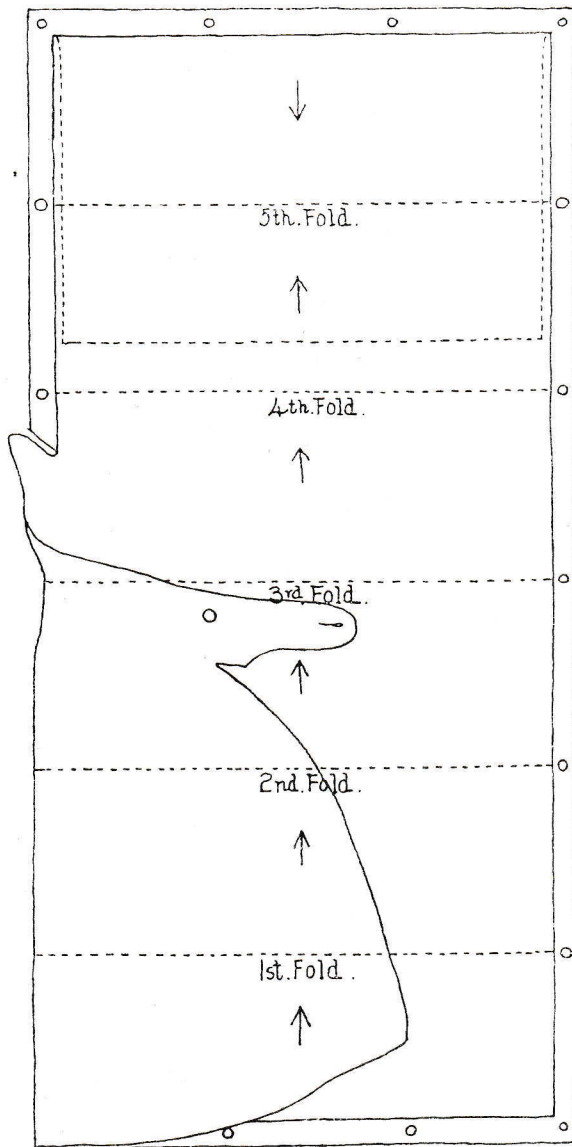
Method of Wearing Chinstrap on Helmet, W.P.

Buckle will be worn on right cheek bone. Spare end of chinstrap will be half an inch in length and pointed.

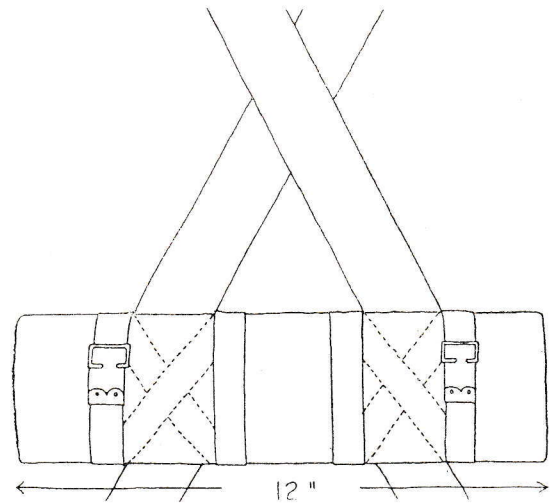
Position of Cap Badge and Helmet Plate.



II.—Method of folding Waterproof Sheet.



III.—Method of Attaching Waterproof Sheet to Web Belt.



Start with the supporting strap on the outside of the sheet, buckle on top and on the outer side of the brace. Bind sheet to the belt by passing strap downwards on the outside and upward on the inside of the belt and brace; then downward on the outside of belt and inside of brace, and then crossing at the back of belt to top of brace and buckle ends together.

IV.—Method of Wearing Haversack.



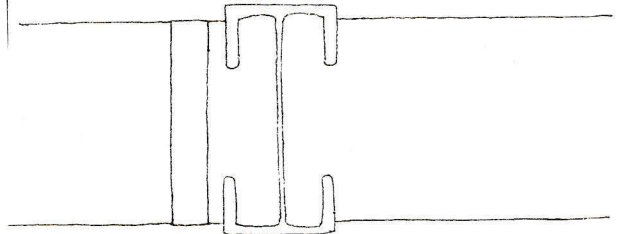
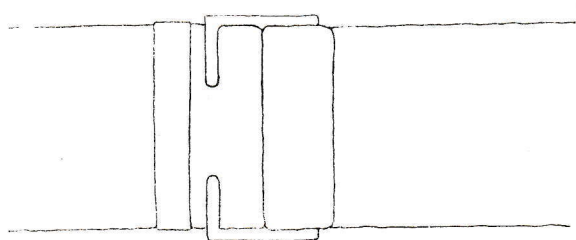
Top of haversack in line with cross-piece of bayonet.

WATERPROOF SHEET WILL BE FOLDED AS FOLLOWS:—Neck and triangular portion folded in. Commencing from the double end, sheet will be folded in five folds, lace hole to lace hole, the fifth fold being folded back across the fourth, about three parts of the way in, so that when folded, two edges only show.

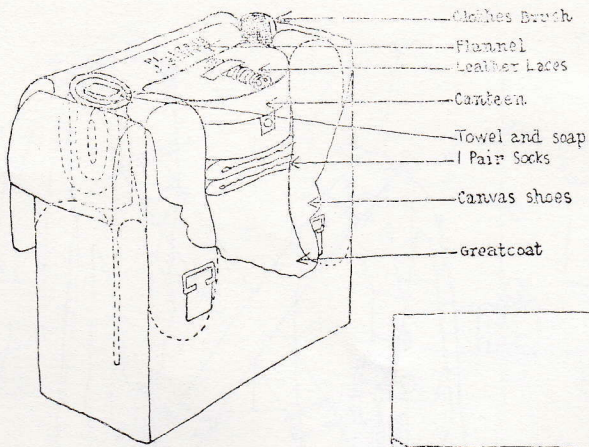
TO ATTACH TO WAISTBELT.—Roll sheet and attach as shown in Diagram III.

VII.—Method of Fastening Web Belt.

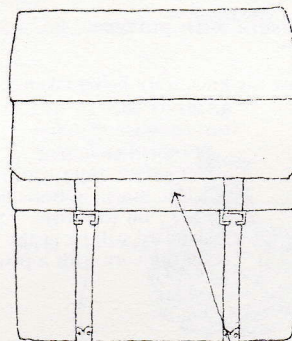
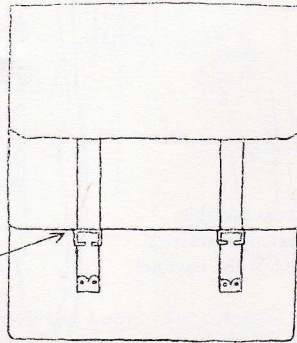
1. **WHEN SIDE ARMS ARE WORN.**—As for drill order, *i.e.*, belt curled on buckle.



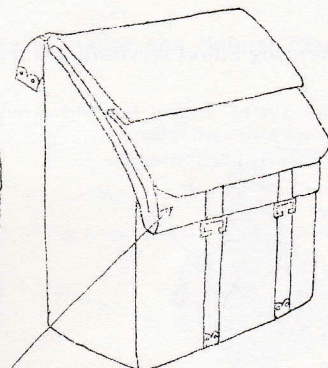
VI.—Method of Packing and Assembling Pack.



Bottom edge of Waterproof sheet in line with top edge of 'D's'

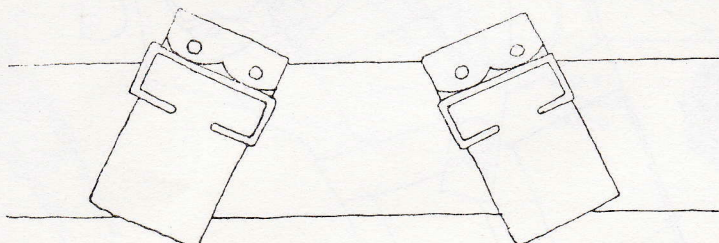


waterproof sheet



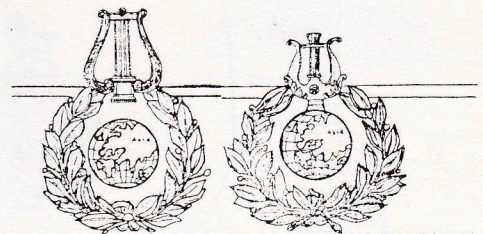
When Greatcoat is not carried in pack, the bottoms of the brass tabs will be in line with the bottom of the pack and the flap of the pack will be folded over.

2. WHEN SIDE ARMS ARE *not* WORN.—Pass end through open part of buckle and then through centre opening to the left, inside belt.



Brass tabs on rear of waist belt will be close to "D's."

AMENDMENT No. 1
Add:— to cap badges

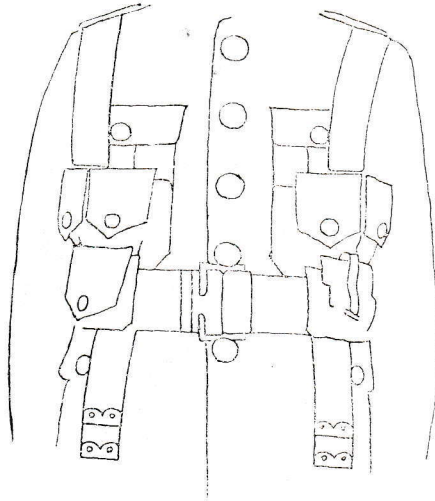


OLD PATTERN NEW PATTERN

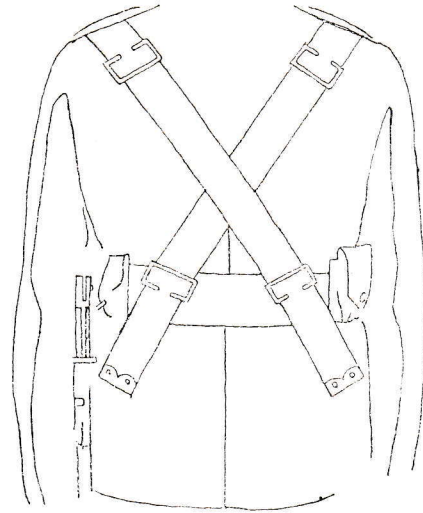
NOTE.—Top edge of laurels to be in line with upper welt of red band.

(R.M. No.1202/37.Q—4/5/37.)

Method of Wearing Drill Order.



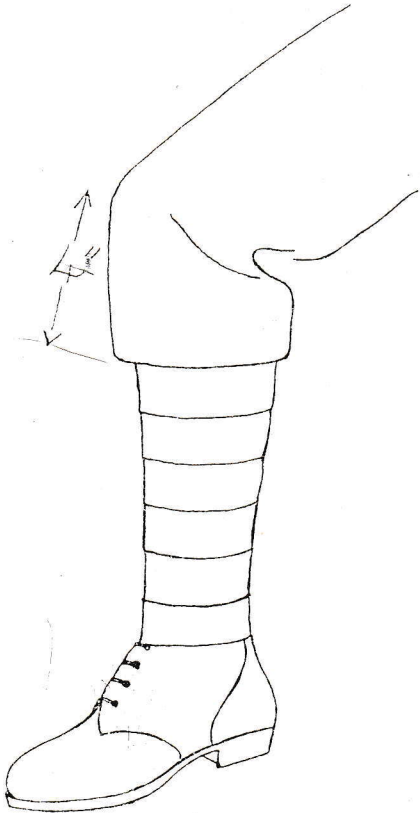
1. Braces in rear of breast pocket buttons, but as close to them as possible.
2. Buckle of belt in centre of fourth and fifth buttons (both buttons showing).
3. Belt fitted on the hooks of tunic. This prevents the weight of the bayonet pulling down on the left side.
4. Curl at buckle of belt to be tight.



1. Braces crossed left over right.
2. "D's" two inches from rear edge of shoulder strap.
3. Ends of braces in line at the bottom with straps on the belt.
4. Belt reasonably tight and on hooks of tunic.

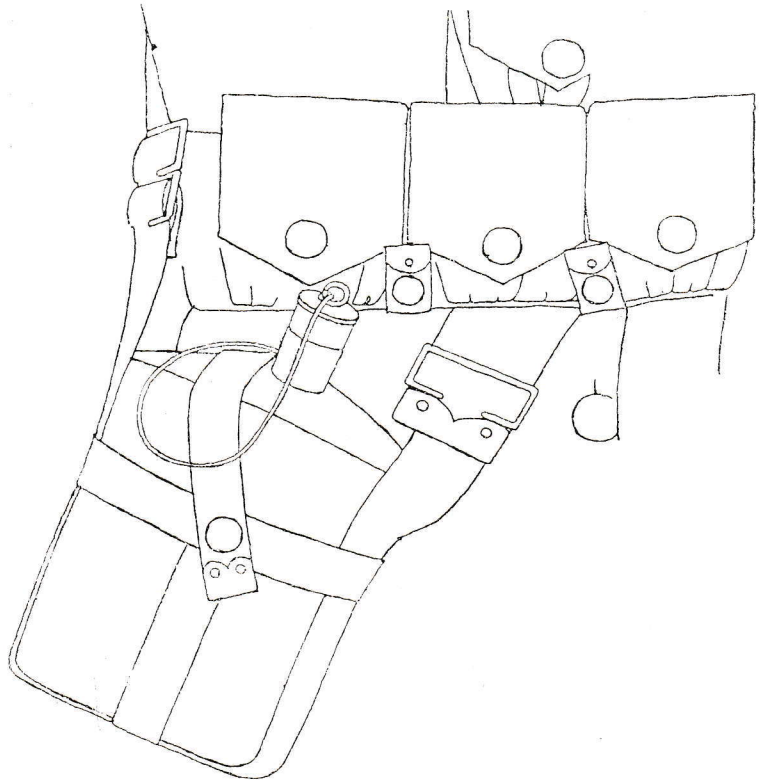
Method of wearing khaki service dress trousers with puttees.

1. The trousers will be creased four inches below the knee, care being taken that they are level with each other.
2. Fourth bootlace will be just visible.



Method of Wearing Waterbottle.

Front attachment of waterbottle will be back between the two straps which attach the right cartridge carrier to the belt. "D" of front attachment will be close down on brass tab of brace. "D" of rear attachment will be close up to "D" on waistbelt. Strap of waterbottle carrier will be in rear of cork. Cork lanyard will be of the type as issued. It will not be plaited, and will be attached to the cork with a plain knot.



MADEIRA IN A MARINE'S BOOT - by Surgeon Commander M E Wilson RNR

Reprinted from 'Decanter Magazine'

Submitted by the Corps Secretary Major Arthur Williams RM

The recent, excellent article on Gunner Madeira by Brigadier Templer in the November issue of 'Decanter' reminded me of a little known incident that occurred when the Royal Marines captured Gibraltar in 1704.

A detachment of marines penetrated the Rock and discovered an enormous vat containing the garrison's entire stock of the little-known Gibraltar wine. The fleeing Spaniards had laid a charge against the vat and this exploded as the marines arrived, killing their gallant captain and seriously injuring the sergeant and three marines. The charge however was ill-placed and at first there was only a trickle of the precious wine from a small hole in the side of the vat. Their medical officer, Surgeon Apothecary Wilson, showing a typical sense of priority, thrust his fist into the hole and stemmed the flow. But the crack widened and the wine could no longer be contained. Wilson, with a flash of genius still characteristic of the family, ordered the marines to remove their boots and fill them with the wine. And so, every drop of wine was saved (fortunately marines have big feet). The marines, now barefoot, fought on with great bravery and captured the Rock. This incident led to their nickname 'Bootless', later corrupted to 'Booties'.

But this is not the end of the story. My ancestor discovered that wine stored in a marine's boot has a curious flavour and is unpalatable unless diluted with water. He quickly learned that if taken in excess it would make even a strong man groggy. Further research revealed that if the mixture was taken daily it would prevent a seafarer's disease later known as scurvy. Henceforward 'grog' was issued to men of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines. The source of the grog was of course kept secret until a zealous Health and Safety at Work Inspector fell through a weak trap door and down a shaft, so penetrating the innermost passes of the Rock. Imagine his astonishment and horror when he spied the secret cave containing the grog quietly fermenting in row upon row of old boots. From that day forward the issue of grog was stopped.

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SYDNEY GAZETTE 30-1-1813

The Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty in ordering Home the Detachment of Royal Marines doing Duty at the Derwent for some Years Past, having granted permission for such of them as were inclined to remain in the country and become settlers, 28 of them having availed themselves of this option. His Excellency the Governor and Commander in Chief directs that they shall be disbanded at Hobart Town on 6 Mar and struck off all military duties from that date, receiving 1 months pay in advance from 6 Mar in consideration of their long and faithful Services and highly meritorious Conduct for 9 years past in this Country.

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GOOD-BYE, GALLIPOLI by W Corbett Williamson

(Submitted by Lt Colin Bowden RM - RMHS)

Standing by in the troopship SOMALI at the naval bombardment of Turkish forts in the Narrows on the 18th March 1915, landing at Sedd-el-Bahr from the FRANCONIA half-way through May, going up the line as an infantryman, being attached to the 2ieme Zouaves, taking part in the Third Battle of Krithia on 4th June, duties as orderly at VIII Army Corps Headquarters, using a six-foot catapult to hurl home-made jam-tin bombs into Turkish trenches, etc. etc., kept me busy for the first part of the Dardanelles operations.

The month of August 1915 found me acting as private-in-charge of a 3.7 trench howitzer up saps in the vineyard sector attempting to distract Turkish attention from what was going on at Suvla Bay. It was then that a local kind of dysentery laid me low. With great difficulty I got back to my unit, and then the hospital ship CLAN MACILVRAY took me to Lemnos Island, some thirty miles west. So great was the pressure on landing, hospital, and convalescent facilities that we had to wait three days in the ship until the liner AQUITANIA left for England with a large number of Suvla Bay wounded on board, possibly two thousand. For a short time this relieved the immediate pressure.

Two months later, however, in October 1915, I returned to Cape Helles on the Gallipoli Peninsula and became an orderly at VIII Army Corps Headquarters, later under occasional Turkish artillery fire. At the beginning of January 1916 preparations for the final evacuation were well advanced. All officers and other ranks who could possibly be spared left the Peninsula at night in order to make the last lift as light as possible. Sub-Lieutenant Robert Ritson RNVR had to go; he left written orders for me to be private-in-charge of his diminishing command of 34 men attached to Corps Headquarters. This consisted of nine men with the Naval Transport Officer, eight Royal Marine Cyclists (of whom I was one), seven officers' servants, six signallers, and four details at Lancashire Landing. When Major J E F d'Apice, our DAA and OMG, now also acting as Camp Commandant, told me that he would require only two orderlies for the last lap, I chose myself and my second-in-command to stay on to the end. After smashing their bicycles under my supervision, the other six orderlies left that night. The two of us who remained spent the last hours of the 8th January 1916 and the first hour or two of the 9th taking signals from the RE signal office about twenty yards away to the office of the GOC Embarkation, Major General the Hon. H A Lawrence, who with Brigadier General H E Street (Corps Chief of Staff), Major d'Apice, and General Lawrence's own staff officer sat round a bridge table on which there was a candle stuck in a bottle for light as all electrical equipment had been destroyed or removed.

In some ways the scene might have been taking place on manoeuvres in peace time; I myself came smartly to attention as I handed each signal to the GOC Embarkation, who read it in silence and passed it round to the other three officers who also read it in silence before I was dismissed. But I had the feeling that a most hazardous operation was being carried out 'according

to plan'. This feeling was heightened by what I saw outside. In the darkness, forty feet below me, I could just make out infantry battalions marching silently round the cliff to 'W' Beach where they would embark in lighters.

Very early in the morning of the 9th January 1916, I handed what turned out to be the last signal to General Lawrence who read it in silence and passed it round. Our Corps Chief of Staff spoke: *'I think it is time for us to go'*, said General Street. General Lawrence and his staff officer left at once, while General Street handed me two fairly heavy suitcases containing papers. We hurried out of the now deserted office, and seeing my rifle leaning against a concrete wall, General Street picked it up and led the way down the zig-zag path to the track between the cliff and the sea.

Off a nearby wooden jetty, put up on the previous afternoon, a ship's boat was waiting for us coming alongside to pick us up. So General Street, Major d'Apice, another staff officer who had just joined us, and we two orderlies were rowed out, in a rising sea, to Admiral de Robeck's yacht TRIAD. After hot drinks and biscuits had been given to us, we two orderlies settled down in a cabin and had just got off to sleep when a terrific explosion shook the TRIAD. It was the shore magazine going up. Lord Kitchener had said during his visit to Gallipoli earlier, *'You will slip away in the dark, and the Turks won't even know you've gone.'* He was right, and the explosion was our 'Good-bye'.

Extract from BRITAIN'S SEA SOLDIERS 1914-1919 Page 334

Second Battle of Passchendaele 26 October 1917

2nd Lt W C WILLIAMSON "B" Company 1/RMLI (Ref. above article).

The attacking formation was three lines of skirmishers, or small columns of platoons or sections, according to the objective assigned to each. At 5.40am the barrage opened and the battalions advanced with great difficulty. 1/RMLI managed to keep well up to the barrage and gained all their objectives including Berks House, Banff House and Bray Farm, and reached the further limit of their objective. They suffered heavy casualties from enfilade fire on their left because the Brigade on that flank was unable to advance. Captain Van Praagh the Adjutant, during an enemy counter-attack, led a small party forward through an intense barrage to garrison one of the positions captured. They also made a useful reconnaissance, whilst 2nd Lieutenant W C Williamson, although wounded, led a platoon forward and captured one of the strong points, which he organised under heavy fire till severely wounded a second time. They were both awarded the Military Cross.

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NOTTINGHAM EVENING POST 7 MAY 1887 - a short advertisement

The 'Royal Marine Inn' Alfred Street Central
Geo Swanwick Jun Proprietor
Everything of the very best
His splendid home Brewed Ales are the Talk of the Neighbourhood



*Royal Marines disembarking at a home port
following (WW1) foreign service.*

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LEICESTER AND NOTTINGHAM JOURNAL, 14 NOVEMBER 1778 (Submitted by H Heather)

A letter from Jamaica dated September 24 says

'Yesterday arrived here his Majesty's ship the Ariadne. Captain Pringle of 20 guns and 120 men, having in tow a French frigate of twenty-eight guns and 248 men which she took 24 leagues to the north of this island after an engagement of three glasses, in which the frigate had 24 killed, and 47 wounded: her bowsprit was carried away the first broadside, and her fore and Mizzen-masts were shot away by the board.

The Ariadne had eight men killed and sixteen wounded and the Lieutenant of Marines was slightly wounded in the foot.'

LETTERS

Letter from Major Brice Somers

Thank you for your letter of Sept 13 welcoming me to the Society. I am glad to learn that my membership had been approved and I am already enjoying Vol IX No 2 of the Sheet Anchor.

Regarding Sgt Arthur Gray's very interesting article on 45 RM Cdo in Normandy, I thought it would interest you to have a copy of a sketch made by my sister Juliet Pannett (who is also a Royal family portraitist) in Amfreville of Bernard Saulnier, the farmer who insisted that Lord Lovat establish his HQ in his farm and who gave an enormous party this year for visiting RM and Army Commandos and their wives. I also enclose a sketch she did of John Howard while he was giving a talk to today's men of 2 Para at Pegasus Bridge, and - which is a propos of Brigadier Durnford-Slater's anecdote on page 13 of the RMHS Newsletter of August 1984 "'Monty' obeys a Marine Sentry's word of command" - a sketch of Monty's HQ site at the Chateau de Creullet at Creully. She lives not far from Portsmouth, at the Pound House, Angmering Village.

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Letter from L W Bridger

Major S B L Somers a wartime friend of mine, has recently shown me some articles taken from the "Sheet Anchor" to do with the 40th Anniversary of the D Day Landings and in consequence told me of the existence of the above Society.

I would be glad if you would send me an application form.

Incidentally I was particularly interested in the second of the two photographs which were featured with Arthur Gray's article. The second photo was not as shown on the "Glider Landing area at Merville". It shows in fact the area about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile west of Amfreville where 1 SS Bde HQ spent the night D/D+1. The men shown are not as might be inferred from the caption airborne troops but men of 1 SS Bde HQ troops. Those in the foreground and to the left of camera were cipher clerks and the like while those to right of camera were Royal Corps of Signals personnel. Indeed one can see one of them at his Bde 22 set. I hope you won't mind my mentioning this but I was with Lord Lovat at this time as ABSO to 1 Bde and well remember both the place and occasion.

(This correspondent, a former RM signals officer (Ty captain) is now a member of RMHS - Editor).

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

1984 events being overshadowed by the GREAT WAR and 'D-DAY' commemorations, some less prominent anniversaries escaped our attention.

Great Britain's oldest Crown Colony BERMUDA celebrated it's 275th year (see Volume 11 No 11 for historical coverage), ST HELENA it's 150th, and whilst the SUDAN Campaign commenced a century ago, just 70 years past the Royal Naval Air Service was setting up in business... all of these events having Corps connections.

Our next issue will contain an article on the Sudan Campaign researched by Joy Donner, and the remaining subjects will also be covered later.

SERGEANT J A EGGO - EASTNEY AND HMS HOOD 1926-1931

In 1923, the Royal Marine Artillery (Blue Marines) had been amalgamated with the R M Light Infantry (Red Marines) into the one body, now known as the Royal Marines. This re-organisation tended to put an end to a long standing feud in which I confess to have entertained as much anti-Blue prejudice as the next man. Surely this underlines my later judgement that in every phase I can call to mind I found Eastney better than Forton, whether one considers the layout of the Barrack buildings or the manner of life therein.

At Eastney, regulations permitted a Sergeant to enter Barracks a few minutes before 9 am, seen by nobody, possibly, but the Sergeant on the Gate or the Barrack Guard, and proceed to his cubicle, change into uniform and then assume his duties. At Forton, even if regulations were agreeable, the Sergeant would have needed to enter Barracks in full view of the whole Parade and of the Barrack Room blocks opposite.

At Eastney, when proceeding on Long Leave, men would perform the duties required of them, eg, spare kit stowed in Company Store-room, rifles returned to Armourer's Shop, personnel correctly attired for proceeding on leave, monies due received from the Pay Office, and now, all these matters having received due attention, the man may go to his Company Lobby, collect his Liberty Ticket and leave the Barracks a free man. This could happen before, say, eleven o'clock. At Forton, the regulations did not permit the issue of the Liberty Ticket until 2 pm. Why? Simply because the regulations said so. Thus men would hang about for over three hours with nothing to do but bite their nails or drink beer. The further unhappy result of this frustration was that men with a long distance to travel (eg Glasgow) would possibly spend the evening in London, with not very happy consequences!

The Second Quartermaster, Eastney, in 1926 was Captain Ernest Green, promoted from the ranks, as is the way with Quartermasters. He was about as pleasant a personality as I was privileged to meet during the whole of my service, and it was quite a disaster when in 1927 he had to leave us for Strike Duties, never to return.

The responsibilities of the Second Quartermaster may be summed up under the headings:- 'Food and Transport'. He is the Catering Officer for the troops and in charge of Cookhouse, Ration Store and Butcher's Shop, while his Transport charges deal with (a) means of transport, and (b) things transported. Means of Transport are the Division's fleet of motor vehicles and the horses which carry certain senior officers on occasions, and are called "Chargers". Motor vehicles need fuel, etc. and servicing. Chargers need fodder, veterinary treatment and shoeing. Things transported are, service stores, luggage and household effects of personnel; also personnel themselves, both living and dead - for the 2nd QM deals with Funeral Contracts. Finally, the 2nd QM is responsible for the barrack gardens, lawns, etc. and therefore, for the motor lawn mowers. My own work as a clerk in his office roped in everything but the Catering.

Forage for the Chargers was delivered from the Contractor monthly,

and each Charger was rationed, of course, but adjustments to quantities were permitted so that a Groom could forfeit so many pounds of oats in exchange for, say, bran. There was a table of equivalents. One of the Grooms used to make a point each month of asking for an adjustment that was a little awkward to work out. I taxed him with this one day and he immediately confessed that he was doing it on purpose, for:- *"It's my job to look after them 'orses and it's your job to work out sums. I does my job and I'm going to see as you does yours."*

One of these Chargers was once ridden by the daughter of its Officer with the unhappy result that it had to be put down. At the end of the month when I presented the Shoeing Bill for approval by the Examiner of Accounts he asked: *"Was this horse shod before or after its death?"*



Marine Eggo (with bridesmaid) at the wedding of Seaman Ken Faulkener, July 1929.

He had also married the previous year and moved out of Barracks into a house at Eastney.

Understandably, a Marine is not allowed to spend his life at an office desk and must, in fact, put in a certain amount of sea time. So, in the spring of 1931 I was drafted to HMS HOOD, at that time, I believe, the largest warship in the world. She was normally a "West Country" ship, that is to say, a ship commissioned from Plymouth and was known down West as "The Mighty 'Ood" where the name was pronounced to rhyme with "Food".

The Hood was not entirely a comfortable ship, particularly at sea, where she seemed to ship more water than one would expect.

Our summer cruise 1931 took us to Torquay, Weymouth and Swanage where nothing of interest to the reader took place; but it was on the autumn cruise that matters came to a head: the destination was Invergordon.

I am not suggesting anything when I simply state that there was an Economy Crisis at that time; there was also a Labour Government in Power and in this atmosphere the ships sailed for the Cromarty Firth and after them was sent a message to the effect that their



The ships company onboard a battleship of this period attend a church parade and service during a foreign cruise.



pay had been reduced. Now I do not like my pay being reduced and do not expect anyone else to like it. All the same, the question recently posed on the Wayside Pulpit of an Edinburgh church is relevant: it asked - Need or Greed? So let us be quite clear on this point: the 1931 reduction of pay meant to some: not to *all*, very real hardship. It was like this. In 1925 the Services introduced a new and diminished pay scale; in the Royal Marines, a man on the new scale was identified by having the letter "X" before his regimental number; they were nicknamed "Jixxers". Many of these men were married and had families of young children and were definitely worried over the new reduction; the worry being augmented by their absence from their wives.

So nobody ought to have been so profoundly shocked when mutiny broke out in the Fleet at Invergordon; and the temper of the men was ugly as the following would show:-

Our Junior Royal Marine Officer ("Young Joe") proposed having a kit muster until warned by his Sergeant Major that, while he believed that the Marines were loyal to a man, it was not a wise thing to put any unnecessary strain upon that loyalty.

I had for some years been acting as a "Lay Preacher" and, by the gracious permission of the Chaplain, was allowed to function in the HOOD, using the Ship's Chapel. I used to announce each service by a printed form giving the subject of the sermon and pinned on the various notice boards around the ship. At Invergordon these forms were torn up by angry men who knew perfectly well that I was in no way to blame for their reduced pay.

It was stated in the British Press that the "Red Flag" was not sung. Well, I was on duty on the Quarter Deck one night as Corporal of the Gangway and a Lighter load of Liberty Men came off shore singing - well, truth to tell, I could not make out the words, but the tune was that of an old folk song called "The Fir Tree", or, "Der Tannenbaum". I ought to have frisked each one of those men coming off shore but not being a brave man I omitted that part of the ceremonies. The Commander was standing very near me and he did not insist. This frisking, by the way, *is* to ensure that men do not smuggle bottles of liquor into the ship. Some wag has said that, while it is difficult to get a ship into a bottle, it is even more difficult to get a bottle into a ship!

Presently an attempt was made to persuade the men to return to work for the purpose of sailing the ships back to their Home Ports but this was contemptuously turned down on the allegation that it was all a trick to bring the men into contact with their wives whose soft feminine influence would persuade their menfolk to a more yielding spirit. One wonders whether wives are any keener than their menfolk to have their pay reduced.

In the end, some agreement was reached and matters returned to normal as we prepared for sea and made for Portsmouth. Some time later, a certain Admiral, who was a personal friend of King George Fifth made it clear that His Majesty had been very upset by the Invergordon affair and that our Admiral had successfully assured

His Majesty that basically the men of the Fleet were as loyal to his Person as ever but had acted under very real provocation.

One other item of interest from Invergordon. Sticking up out of the waters of the Cromarty Firth were the funnels of the Armoured Cruiser, HMS NATAL. They were not there when I visited the port in 1972(?). The Natal was one of three warships destroyed during World War I by, I believe, suspected sabotage. The other two were, VANGUARD at Scapa Flow and BULWARK at Sheerness. One Marine was blown through the bottom of the BULWARK and survived. I have since met him.

(Marine Eggo was promoted to Corporal in 1930 whilst serving at RMB Eastney.)



HMS HOOD which was launched in 1918 (Clydebank) a battlecruiser of 46,300 tons (full load) and speed of 31 knots, was sunk in the North Atlantic, 24 May 1941, with few survivors.

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CHATHAM ORDER 8 October 1781

In order that the Marine Musical Band may not hereafter be looked upon in the light of common fiddlers, and permitted at the desire of indifferent persons to play in that capacity at ordinary and common Balls and Concerts, it is directed that in future, the Band or any part of them shall not have the liberty to play anywhere out of the barracks but where the Divisional Business calls upon them, or where the Government may take any concern.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS OF THE RM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Sheet Anchor published twice yearly, has articles on operations, uniforms, badges, extracts from contemporary documents and other information on the Corps' history.

Several Publications edited or written by members of the Society are available (while stocks last) from the RM Museum Shop, or our own sales contact.

- No 1 *Hail and Farewell: some notes on domestic life of the Portsmouth Marines* - assembled by Wilfred Davey MBE BEM.

- No 2 *Royal Marine Records Part I* by General Sir H E Blumberg KCB, extracts edited by Captain G H Hennessy RM and Major A J Donald RM, covers aspects of the Corps' social, administrative and domestic history from 1755-1792.

- No 3 *The Royal Marines and the Dockyards 1755-1949* by Wilfred Davey MBE BEM is an account of the policing role of the Corps in the Royal Dockyards and other establishments.

- No 4 *Royal Marine Records Part II* by General Sir H E Blumberg KCB, extracts edited by Major A J Donald RM and J D Ladd, covers aspects of the Corps' social, administrative and domestic history from 1793-1836.

- No 5 *Royal Marine Records Part III* completes extracts (see Nos 2 and 4 above) from General Sir H E Blumberg's typescripts of 1934 and covers the years 1837-1914.

- No 6 *The Ghost of a General (RM Officers Pre-WWI)* and *The RM Officers of 1914* by Lt Col Donald F Bittner USMCR, is a double volume in which he details the stalemate reached in the promotion ladder for officers of the Corps before hostilities erased that problem, and in the second part gives an account of some of the senior or notable officers who served through that war.

- No. 7 *One Time Marine (A Bootneck's Tale)*. A lighthearted reflection on life in the Corps, as experienced by Marine Haydn Jenkins who served (1947-56) in Cyprus, Malta, Hong Kong and Malaya. It is well illustrated with topical photographs and cartoons.