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HISTORICAL SOCIETY



SHEET ANCHOR

Volume X Number 2

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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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FLANK COMPANIES, BRITISH MARINES, 1774-1776

By H. Charles McBarron and John R. Elting

(submitted by W R (Billy Bob) Crim - RMHS)

While British marines were not unknown to colonial America, their first appearance in considerable numbers was at Boston in 1774 (1). General Thomas Gage's army there requiring reinforcements, an improvised battalion of fewer than 400 marines was hastily dispatched, without gaiters or watchcoats. Their camp equipment, tents, and spare clothing turned up in Rhode Island. However, their commander, the able and popular Major John Pitcairn, drilled and fathered them into a first-class unit (2). They took part in the Lexington-Concord brawl, with 74 casualties out of 336 effectives. When some 700 additional marines arrived in May 1775, Pitcairn reformed his force into the 1st and 2nd Marine Battalions, organized on the same basis as British infantry regiments, with Army pay and rations. Each formed two flank companies, one of light infantry, one of grenadiers. These were then detached to serve with the army's provisional battalions of grenadiers and light infantry. The entire 1st Marine Battalion and the flank companies of the 2nd Battalion were engaged at Bunker's Hill.

In early 1776, the marine battalions and light infantry companies were held at Halifax while the two grenadier companies went off to Long Island (3). In 1777, the light companies took part in the attack on Machias, Maine. Subsequently, all marines were ordered back to England for fleet duty.

The present (since 1802 "Royal") marines had been organized in 1755. Available sources do not indicate when the first grenadier companies were authorized, though they may well have existed in 1761 (4). The first mention of light infantry appears to be at Plymouth in 1772, when the captain of HMS ALBION protested that his marine detachment had not been issued coats and hats. The marine commandant there had to explain that they were light infantry "...in consequence of which their coats were cut shorter than the rest of the companies (and the) lace was taken off the Hatts to make Bands, Loops, and Tassels (for their caps)..." (5) Since the British Army had reintroduced light infantry companies in 1771, it may well be that the marines followed suit. Obviously, it was new to the ALBION's captain.

1. See "Hector Vaughan and His Forty Marines" by George S Saussy, *Military Collector and Historian*, Fall, 1980.
2. Pitcairn found his men shorter than the average soldier and recommended that no more men under 5'6" be enlisted.
3. Eric L Manders, "The Battle of Long Island", *Monmouth Beach*, N J 1978, pp 44-45. The grenadiers had a lieutenant and 21 men captured when they blundered into the blue-uniformed Delaware Continental Regiment under the impression that it was a Hessian unit.
4. After the attack on Belle Isle off the west coast of France in 1761, the French garrison reportedly spoke of the marines involved as "Petits Grenadiers."
5. Cyril Field, "Britains Sea Soldiers", 1, London 1924, p.165.



Light Infantryman

Grenadier

*Officer,
Light Infantry*

Flank Companies, British Marines, 1774-1776

The marines' uniform was red, faced white, with white waistcoat and breeches; half-gaiters were worn unless long ones were specified in orders. Lace was white with a red and blue stripe on its right side. Stocks were black. Individual equipment apparently was identical with that of the Army. Enlisted marines' buttons were of pewter, possibly with the incised design of a fouled anchor as is established for c 1780. Marines of the battalion companies wore their hair in the conventional queue; grenadiers and light infantrymen had theirs "platted" (plaited) and tucked up under the caps (6). Flank companies had "wings" on their coats.

The grenadiers' black bearskin caps also followed Army specifications, but carried the marines' special badge of "The Anchor and Star", surrounded by a laurel wreath granted them for valor at Belle Isle. For reasons unexplained, the light infantry cap badge had oak leaves instead of laurel (7). When the grenadier companies were formed at Boston, fur caps were sent out from England under the charge of a Captain Walker (8).

Officers had silver lace and buttons. Orders in 1773 specified a "Shoulder Sword Belt, with Clasp and Pouch to be worn over the coat, the same as the Pte (enlisted) Men" for light infantry officers (9). The c 1780 officers' buttons were bone-backed with a silver face, carrying the design of a fouled anchor within a wreath, and a scalloped edge. There is no clear agreement on the design of the officer's belt "clasp". In April 1784 it was ordered changed to "buckles and slides". which shortly thereafter were definitely replaced by belt plates. General agreement is that the first clasps/plates were oval, probably with an anchor design, as shown in contemporary paintings of naval officers. Considering the marines' dispersed service, there probably was some variation. Oblong plates with a crown-and-lion device appeared in c 1782 (10). As it was not usual for flank company officers to wear wings until c 1805-1806, our flank company officers has two epaulettes, a distinction allowed grenadier officers in the 1768 Warrent and quickly adopted by those of the light infantry companies (11).

As too often happens, shortly after this text and plate were completed, Fellow Londahl-Smidt, who is preparing an article for the "Journal" on these marine battalions, secured additional information about the flank companies.

6. Ibid p.164.
7. Examples of both types of headgear were preserved in the Officers' Mess at Portsmouth. Photographs are shown in Fields' work.
8. Captain Walker was instructed to see that the grenadier caps did not get wet or suffer damage during the voyage; whenever possible, he was to air them.
9. Field, op cit.
10. H G Parkyn, "Shoulder Belt Plates and Buttons", 1956, pp 240-41.
11. H Oakes-Jones "Wings", Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research. January 1923, pp 7 - 8.

The "reinforcement" that arrived in May, brought along with caps and equipment for 20 pioneers, swords for 180 grenadiers and 162 each of hatchets and cases, hornes and slings, and shot bags for the light infantry.

We heartily thank Fellows George F G Stanley, Eric I Manders and Donald M Londahl-Smidt, as well as Barry Rich and David Taylor of Parks Canada, for their aid.

This article and plate appear by courtesy of The Company of Military Historians, Westbrook, Connecticut 06498 USA.

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Bunker Hill Diorama depicting Maj John Pitcairn, commander of Marines (centre); presented to the RM Museum in 1976 by the maker Mike Williams, a former RMR Officer.



MARINE RECRUITING POSTER, 1776-1783

During the American War of Independence, the following advertisement appeared in the Ipswich Journal of 26th February 1780. This newspaper, now defunct, had a wide circulation in Suffolk and Essex.

VOLUNTEERS

For the First Division of Marines.

Twenty Recruits are wanted immediately to complete the 31st Company, Commanded by Captain Shairp.

Now is the time for young men of spirit to gain honour and make their fortune by captures from the enemy. The superior advantages attending the marines' service are well known; particularly at this time, when our ports are crowded (sic) with French and Spanish Prizes. Marine Soldiers have every advantage of his Majesty's royal bounty, excellent clothing, arms and accoutrements with the addition of provisions found them gratis when on board ship, besides their full pay; and when in service, they share in prize-money equal to able seamen; these are advantages well known, and can be testified by many in this county, who have made their fortunes in the last, but more particularly in the present war. All under the age of 40, and above the size of 5 feet 3 inches, will meet with due encouragement, by applying to Capt Shairp in Queen's Street, or to his sergeants at the Marlborough's Head, Botolph's Gate, Colchester.

- oOo -

THE PISTOL WHICH FIRED "THE SHOT HEARD 'ROUND THE WORLD"

By Merrill Lindsay

Early in the morning of April 19, 1775, 800 British soldiers and marines hove into the sight of 70 or 80 Minute Men assembled on the Green in Lexington. The early morning sun was in the eyes of the militia men as they watched the lines of smartly dressed regulars march out of the east on the Boston road.

The British were out to capture John Hancock and Samuel Adams and to destroy the military stores of the Minute Men in Concord twelve miles away. Thanks to Paul Revere and William Dawes, Hancock and Adams had been alerted and had made their way into the countryside. The Minute Men, although outnumbered ten to one, momentarily barred the way to Concord.

This was the *moment of confrontation*. Captain John Parker had placed his command of Minute Men so that they blocked the road that the British must take to get to Concord. The fearful and outnumbered Minute Men were admonished by Parker with the words: "Stand your ground! Don't fire unless fired upon! But if they want to have war, let it begin here!"

Major Pitcairn, a Scot who headed the British force, galloped up to within 100 feet of Parker's front line and called out "Lay down your arms you damned rebels and disperse." Parker outnumbered ten to one and opposing untested militia against professional soldiers, took a reasonable course and ordered his men to disperse and not to fire on the regulars. The men slowly dispersed carrying their muskets and fowlers with them. This was not to Pitcairn's liking as he shouted again "Damn you, why don't you lay down your arms?" which they would have done had they been issued guns. They belonged to the farmers instead and were valued possessions. At this juncture, someone fired a shot. It was either the enraged Pitcairn or his adjutant. In any event, we have documentation that *the shot was fired from a pistol.**



* "Amid the shouting and the rushing there came, suddenly a shot. Paul Revere heard it. He had just come from the Buckman Tavern, where he and Hancock's clerk had gone to fetch Hancock's trunk. From a tavern window Revere had seen the redcoats approach the

green, and now, passing among the Minutemen and carrying the trunk, he heard the shot and saw smoke in front of the redcoats."

"The shot appeared," said Revere, "to be a pistol."

Pistol? The British officers were the only ones there who had pistols!

Others on the scene also thought it was a pistol. Minuteman Benjamin Tidd, back from carrying the alarm to Bedford, said it was a pistol. So did three more spectators, Joseph Abbott, Levi Mead and Levi Harrington. Abbott and Harrington saw British officers fire "a pistol or two on the Lexington company". (Lexington Concord Alarm, pp 132, 133.)

None of the Minute Men were armed with pistols, nor were the British infantrymen, who carried Brown Bess muskets. Whoever pulled the trigger fired "THE SHOT HEARD 'ROUND THE WORLD." The single pistol shot was returned by a ragged volley from the retreating Minute Men. At this juncture Pitcairn gave the order to fire. His men fired two volleys, broke ranks to pursue the fleeing farmers. Eight of the Minute Men were dead and nine more were wounded.

The British moved on unopposed to Concord while the American Minute Men continued to gather along the route that the British would follow to return to Boston. The shooting started again in Concord. This time it was the American farmers taking potshots at the marching lines of British. The sniping of the Americans began to harry the weary British who had marched 22 miles with 55 pound sacks and 13 pound muskets.

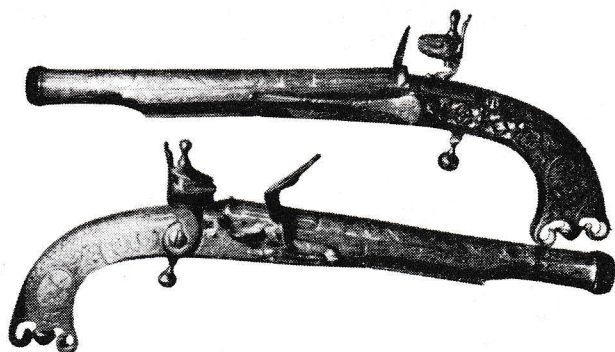


The Fight on Lexington Common - 19 April 1775.

The Battle of Concord escalated into a running series of skirmishes along the twenty miles of road back to Boston. In one ambush, Major Pitcairn's horse was creased by a musket ball, bolted, unseating Major Pitcairn, and galloped into the provincial lines. The horse was seized and with it Pitcairn's pistol, still encased in its holster.

The deadly fire from behind trees, rocks and buildings killed 73 Regulars, wounded 174. Twenty six simply could not be accounted for. Some, probably wounded, remained in the farm country, cared for by the farmers and their families, who, after all, had been British subjects up to that very morning. The losses of the British would have been much greater had not Lord Hugh Percy with a thousand men marched to Lexington where he received the exhausted survivors of the retreat from Concord. The fresh troops from Boston fenced around the survivors in the form of a hollow square, stopped the pursuing Americans with two light cannon and cared for their wounded in the Munroe Tavern in Lexington before retiring to Boston in fair order. The opening engagement of the war had cost the Americans 40 killed, 39 wounded and 5 missing.

After the immediate threat of the British had been disposed of, the Yankees did what came naturally, they held an auction of captured British equipment, including Pitcairn's wounded horse, his saddle and saddle roll, and most importantly, the beautiful silver mounted and engraved all-metal Scottish pistols which fired the shot heard 'round the world. Minuteman, Captain Nathan Barrett bought the pistols. Barrett gave them to General Israel Putnam, who was George Washington's second-in-command and the commander of the Connecticut Foot Guards, and other units which fought at Bunker Hill. Later, Aaron Bull, Adjutant to "Old Put" verified them as being the Pitcairn Pistols.



A miniature portrait of Maj Pitcairn (left) and his pistols (right)

(From "Man at Arms" Vol 3 No 5 magazine - Providence R I USA)
to whom we are indebted.

CORPS MUSEUM PRESS NOTICES

PRESENTATION OF ORIGINAL EXTRACT FROM LORD NELSON'S ORDER BOOK DATED 6 MARCH 1803

An original extract from Lord Nelson's Order Book has been presented to the Royal Marines Museum. The Order Book entry was made on 6 December 1799 and consists of an instruction to Major James Wier of the Marines to take command of the Marine Forces then employed in Malta. The Museum already possesses copies of other Nelson letters to Major Wier commending him on his actions in raising a battalion of Maltese Infantry which played an important part in removing the French garrison from the Island. The extract was taken on 6 March 1803 and authenticated and signed by Lord Nelson at that time. As far as can be established it has remained in the family possession ever since and this is the first time it will have been seen on public display.

The presentation was made by the descendents of Major James Wier. They consist of Major General Martin Garrod, Chief of Staff to the Commandant General Royal Marines, his sisters Mrs Janet Callard and Miss Madie Garrod, Colonel David Mallam, Commandant of the Army Air Corps Centre Middle Wallop and Deputy Chairman of the Army Air Corps Museum Trustees and his brother Mr Marcus Mallam, the Project Director of the Portsmouth Naval Heritage Project. (The Mary Rose, HMS Victory, HMS Warrior (1860) and the Royal Naval Museum).

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OPENING OF NEW MEDAL DISPLAY AND WEAPON EXHIBITION

The Lord Mayor of Portsmouth and the Lady Mayoress formally opened two new displays at the Royal Marines Museum at 3.30pm on Wednesday 20 March 1985.

The first of these is a new medal display containing the medal of Sergeant James Jones who served as a Royal Marine during the early part of the last century. His story has been specially recorded in English and French on a tape which gives a dramatic account of his life and times, including his experiences during the Battle of Trafalgar. In due course, Sergeant Jones' medal will be replaced by others belonging to other well known Royal Marines, so that the many fascinating human stories which are contained within the Museums' magnificent medal collection can be brought to life.

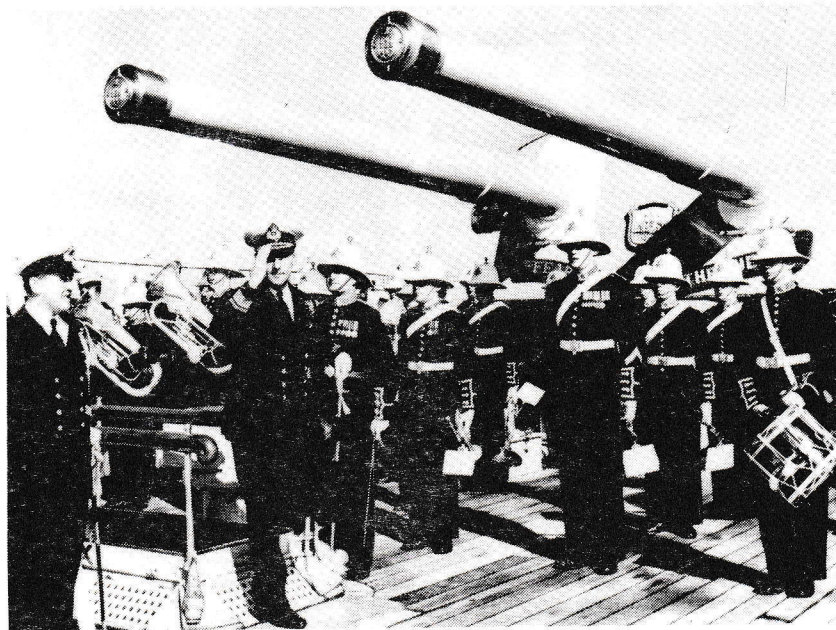
The second is a temporary weapon exhibition consisting of over 40 different types of handgun used by the Royal Marines throughout their history. These include the early matchlock musket of 1664, the famous Brown Bess and the modern self loading rifle as well as a fine array of pistols and machine guns. The exhibition tells, in simple terms, the story of how these weapons were developed and explains some of the difficulties that marines had in handling them. It is brought to life by a beautiful set of new water-colours by the well known military artist, Charles Stadden, some fascinating photographs and a short video showing modern weapons in action. The exhibition, which will remain in place until the end of the year, has great appeal to the weapon enthusiast and also contains plenty of general interest for other visitors.

MASQUERADING AS ROYAL MARINES? by John Trendell

Such a suggestion crossed my mind when trying to assess the credentials of several fellow 'passengers' bound for the Antipodes in HMS SUFFOLK some forty years ago. The 'buzz' was that they were veterans of numerous 'kamikaze' attacks on their ship in the Pacific, but I was completely baffled as to why a group of 'fair dinkum' Aussies should be dressed as Royal Marines; the only variation from the sealed pattern being an unfamiliar cap badge and RAN brass shoulder titles. As a comparative 'sprog', I finally plucked up courage to ask one of their number who they were. "We're bandsmen from the Aussie, sport - we've left her for a refit in Devonport", was the reply, or words to that effect. (The "Aussie" being the County class cruiser, HMAS AUSTRALIA and sister ship of the SUFFOLK).

That incident in the final weeks of the Second World War sprang to mind whilst holidaying 'down under' a few months ago. My wife and I were being entertained at the home of a retired Director of Music (Lieutenant Commander) of the Royal Australian Navy. "Let me show you a most prized possession", said our host at the end of an extremely enjoyable evening. He there and then produced his carefully preserved Royal Marines style No 1 ceremonial blue uniform, complete with scarlet sash and gold wire bandmaster's badge. As the whole of our friend's service had been in the Royal Australian Navy, why at one time should he have been dressed as a Royal Marine?

The story really commences in 1901 with the federation of the six independent Australian colonies. The new Commonwealth Government soon made known its intention to establish an Australian navy with a view to replacing the permanent Royal Navy squadron based in Sydney for service in Australian waters. Before pursuing that line of enquiry too far we need to consider what was going on in the Royal Navy at the beginning of the present century, so far as music was concerned. The majority of sea-going bands were composed of foreign musicians engaged for the period of a ship's commission; the remainder were made up of poorly trained continuous service band ratings. In 1903 the Admiralty decided to replace these unsatisfactory musical arrangements with a properly organised, disciplined and professionally trained Band Service, forming part of the Royal Marine Forces. Whether by accident or design, the first RM band of the new system to serve at sea was drafted in 1905 to HMS EURYALUS, flagship of the Royal Navy's Australian Squadron. This was at a time when initial plans were being made for the embryo Australian navy. The Naval Board of the Commonwealth Government must have been impressed with the appearance and performances of EURYALUS' RM band, for it decided that the flagship of the new navy should have a similar band. Consequently six locally enlisted musicians were sent to England in 1912 to join up there with a number of ex-RM and Army bandsmen to form the band of the battle cruiser, HMAS AUSTRALIA, flagship of the Royal Australian Navy. Prior to her commissioning, this disparate group of musicians was knocked into shape and kitted up as Royal Marines at the Royal Naval School of Music, then located at the headquarters of the Royal Marine Artillery at Eastney. Thus the precedent for RAN bandsmen to wear RM dress was established.



ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY
Band of Flagship HMAS Australia - 1954

In the late 1930's the cruiser strength of the Royal Australian Navy was doubled by the transfer of three improved Leander class ships from the Royal Navy. To assist during the resultant period of growth of the Band Branch, Bandmaster (Warrant Officer) R H Stoner LRAM, was loaned by the RM Band Service to the Royal Australian Navy. During the Second World War several bands of the RAN served at sea with distinction, the bandsmen having an identical station in the TS as their RM band counterparts. In 1941 the entire band of HMAS SYDNEY, one of the Leander class cruisers, was lost. The names of the bandsmen, together with those of other RAN band casualties, are recorded on the Naval War Memorial on Plymouth Hoe.

In the immediate post-war period the strength of the RAN Band Branch reached an extremely low level due to men going to pension, general demobilisation and recruitment difficulties. The Corps was once again able to assist by loaning an experienced band officer to revive the service, and to establish a School of Music at the Flinders Naval Depot, near Melbourne. As a result of the endeavours of Commissioned Bandmaster C G McLean DSM LRAM, the Band Branch went from strength to strength during the 1950's, thus making it possible for the ships and shore establishments of the modern Royal Australian Navy to be provided with first class military bands. McLean's valuable work in Australia over a period of three years was acknowledged by the award of an MBE.

Throughout this period of growth the bands continued to wear Royal Marines band dress. The 'crunch' came at the 1956 Olympic Games held in Melbourne when a misinformed commentator announced a display by the massed bands of the Royal Australian Navy as being presented by the Australian Army band. Quite naturally, on such an auspicious international occasion, naval pride was sorely offended. It was this unfortunate incident which was largely responsible for the bands of the Royal Australian Navy changing from Royal Marines dress to naval rig in 1960, thus ending a unique tradition of half a century.

SERGEANT J A EGGO RM - FROM HMS HOOD TO DISCHARGE

After Christmas at home we sailed early in January (1932) for the Spring Cruise in atrocious weather ... our destination, the West Indies! We arrived at Bridgetown (Barbados) on 21 January, where I had to pluck up courage to read a cablegram telling me I had become a father to a girl ... both doing well! We went on to visit the island of St Vincent in company with HMS REPULSE and from there we finally called at Trinidad, where I should have liked to visit the Lake of Pitch, but this was not possible. (Nelson and other ship's captains of his era used this source for the sealing of their wooden built vessels.)

In March I left HMS HOOD and returned to RMB Eastney. My last ship, like HMS CARLISLE (my previous one) now lies on the ocean bed; which sad news first reached me via the local paper in Shanghai (China) with bold headlines stating 'HMS HOOD sunk' in huge red letters.

There remains little more to tell of my twenty one years service in the Corps; I was soon appointed to the Pay Office and the following year promoted to Sergeant. Those of us who were due to be discharged into civil life in the mid-1930's had to be concerned with the very serious matter of employment, and not surprisingly this was a very much discussed subject at that time. So, as mid-1936 approached I began searching newspapers and obtaining testimonials from people who knew me; but it all proved unnecessary, for the Admiralty took me on as a pensioner clerk to the Staff Officer (Intelligence) in Shanghai, so I took temporary work between appointments and thus was not unemployed for one single day from my discharge until my final retirement in December 1962!

When I walked out of Eastney Barracks towards the end of July in 1936, it was not to be for the last time, because at the end of 1942 I was back in the UK having been repatriated by the Japanese under a 'diplomatic exchange' arrangement. It was then my duty to report to Eastney again, as a pensioner. This was perhaps a mere matter of form as the nature of my employment in World War Two made me exempt from military service; but I discovered that it was not a matter of form and was told that the Brigade Major would like to see me, and then when I was subsequently before the Commandant I was pleased to see that he was an officer I had served under in the 6th RM Battalion in North Russia in 1919. Brigadier Noyes, popularly (but never disparagingly) known as "No-Yes", for he was a very pleasant gentleman, asked me about my work in China with a view to getting me involved in the same work within the Corps. However nothing became of it, and I believe he died soon after this interview.

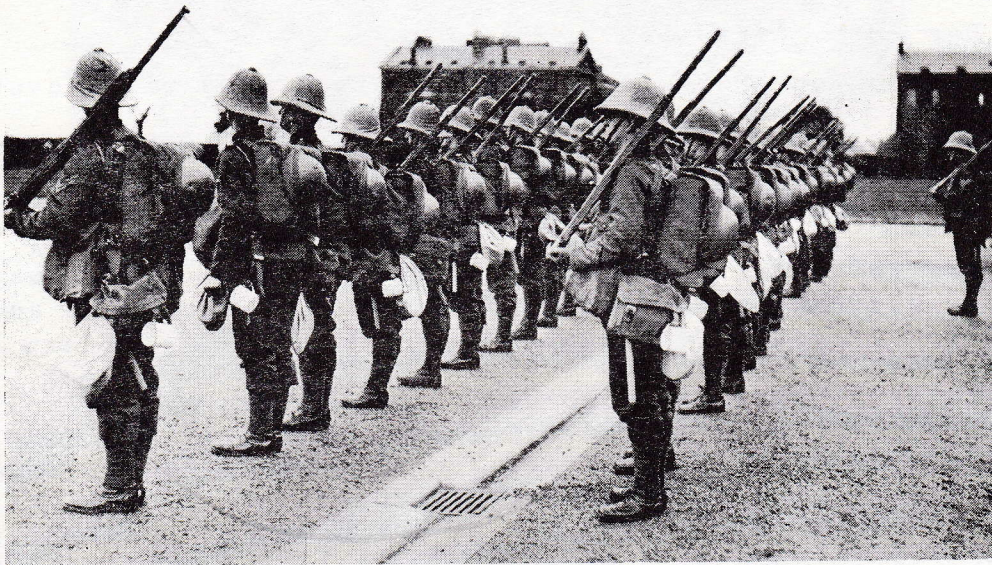
Now, well into my eighties, do I regret anything? My answer is an emphatic 'NO'! - Although WWI put an end to my promising career in the Fire Offices' Committee, and white feather clutching females drove me to the recruiting office (aged 17 years) where difficulties made joining the Army diverted me into the Royal Marines instead for Long Service. I would do it all again.

"Money, success - these are not everything", a friend told me when I was twenty one. No, money and success are indeed not

everything, but rather when a man knows that he cannot think of any person in the world with whom he would wish to change places he need have few regrets. The healthy discipline of the parade ground and the quarter deck did me no harm but rather, I fancy, a power of good.

*(This brings to an end the narrative of Ex-Sgt J A Eggo (Po 18743) who, in this his 88th year, resides happily in the Edinburgh area.
- Editor)*

- oOo -



*Royal Marines about to leave for foreign service
(Eastney Barracks - c 1930)*

AN OLD RECRUITING ADVERTISEMENT

In 1771 one Sergeant Calbet was sent recruiting to Birmingham for the Royal Marines. This is the advertisement which notified his activities:-

July 22, 1771 - He That Works Hard Is Sure to be Poor.
After six Days' hard Labour comes Sunday - you rest;
And no sooner peeps Monday but you are quite shy of Cash.
Therefore to made Life easy, and fill your Pockets with Money,
Sergeant Calbet will learn any young Man a Profession (Without Fee or Reward) by which the Learner will be sure to earn a Guinea and a Crown the very first Hour. He will also introduce you to His Majesty's First Division of Marines, which is always quartered at Chatham, only thirty miles from London, to which Place Pleasure-Boats carry Passengers for Six-pence each. When you arrive at Chatham, you are immediately provided with Cloaths, free Quarters in a Public-House, where you will be sure to meet with merry Fellows, a kind Landlady, and a rousing Fire: do nothing but on a fine day dance to the softest Music, feed on Dainties, drink the best Liquors and Play at "Why won't you" with the prettiest Girls, saying "Chatham for ever" and "God save the King".
N.B. He teaches no Militia Men or Apprentice.

THE JOURNAL OF GUNNER J T WILKINSON RMA
1883-1886 - 15TH COY RMA - HMS ALEXANDRA

Researched by Joy E Donner (RMHS) at the
National Maritime Museum Ref NMM 83/187.

The Journal was written in an exercise book of 50 pages (double-sided).

Private Wilkinson volunteered to join the Expeditionary Force to serve on shore in the Sudan, at Suakim, Red Sea Port, in 1884. He transferred to HMS HECLA, for passage with Lieutenant George Aston RMA and 11 other RMAs from HMS ALEXANDRA, to serve with them in action in the Sudan desert.

"25th Dec 1883 ALEXANDRA at Malta.

Lieutenant Aston RMA went to the hospital today with fever mad.

(Wilkinson went to hospital with fever 16th December 1883. Came out of hospital 24th December) - "a lot stronger and better. Had a good Christmas Dinner."

"28th Jan 1884 The Fleet is ready for sea and is now awaiting orders. Our new Gunnery Lieutenant Adair (RN) arrived and Bourke left, posted Commander."

"7th Feb 1884 Today at 5pm orders were given to relieve the Guard and to prepare to leave the ship in the morning for the Sudan and reinforce Admiral Hewetts' Red Sea Fleet at Souakim so everything is hurry run and tear for to get ready for Marching Order. They wont give us any definite orders as to what we are to take with us so we are going nearly as we like though we are taking everything with us.

...We are to pass the Doctor in the morning.

"8th Feb 1884 Passed the Doctor to a man. At 6am no one rejected. We fell in about 8am all ready and willing mustering ...men (no number given) and 3 officers. Then the skipper (Capt Rawson) addressed us and said a few words about the errand we were to go on."

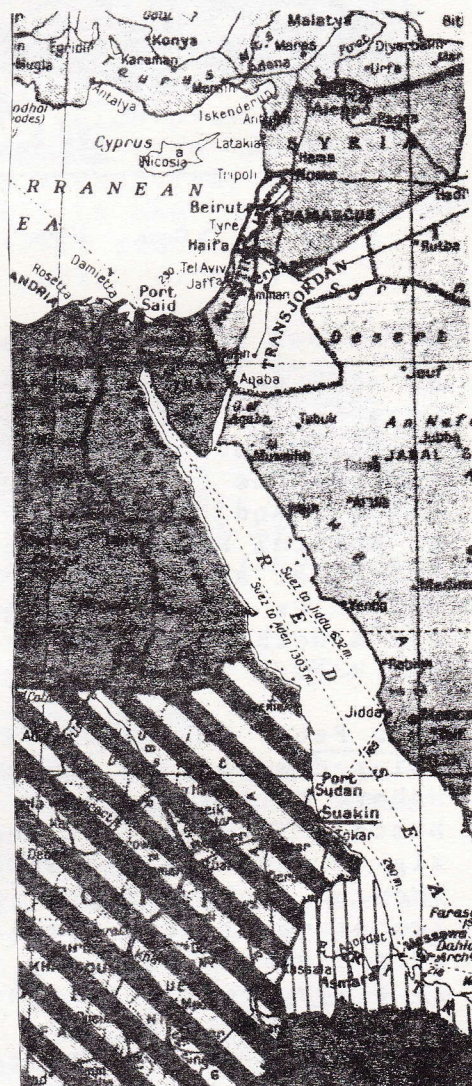
"I know that several of you are very young but I know you are willing and I feel sure that I can place the credit of my ship in your hands coupled with the name of our Queen and Country and know that whatever you are told to do for them you will do it and keep up the good name and add laurels to your illustrious Corps so that in saying 'Goodbye' for myself, the officers and remnant of the Alex's Ships Company, I know that wherever you go you will have their Hearty Best Wishes and hopes of your speedy return, so 'Goodbye men'."

...We went in the tug to the HECLA, the Band playing "goodbye" and several nice tunes for the occasion. We were soon transferred, and found the INFLEXIBLE 12 men, and IRIS 7 men, FALCON 7, and COQUETTE 5 men, all aboard. So it was "Come

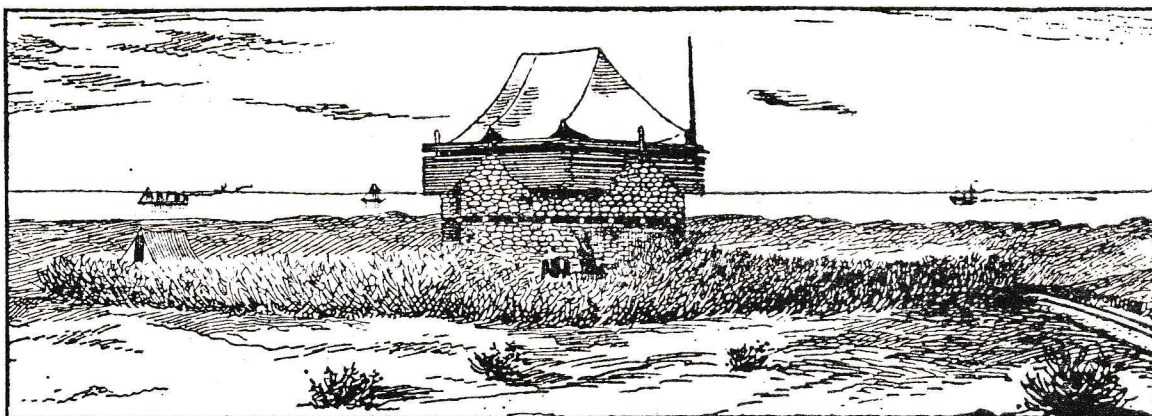
Superb and lets' away". They all got in and a lot of stores and we unmoored. The Admiral coming to say farewell, so we slipped and started in company with the MONARCH (who had the TEMERAIRE's men aboard) for Port Said, the bands of all the ships playing us out of harbour and we made plain sail and soon left Malta away to windward.



HMS ALEXANDRA at Malta



10th Feb - At Sea We arrived at Port Said on the night of the 11th and went in on the 12th to find the ORONTES Troopship with the Paid off Blue Jackets in her from China and the Cape, so orders arriving, time we were going in for her to take us in at once. We embarked at almost 12 noon, 350 strong, and it was "Cash and Carry" too for we had to jump for the Baggage ports on account of the swell in the harbour. We got orders to proceed at once for Suez and get fresh orders there, so we got to the 1st Gate of the Canal and started again in the morning. 3 separate times we were fast in the mud before we arrived at Suez on the 14th. Then all was hurry and tear to take the 42nd Black Watch, and 100 Mounted Infantry and Horses from Cairo and proceed without delay to SOUAKIM. We had the Electric Lights strung up to the Yard Arms so as to work at night.



SANDBAG REDOUBT, SUAKIN.

2 Guns. 1 Mountain Gun. 1 Gatling. Garrison—Royal Marines.

As soon as we had embarked the troops and horses we started for Souakim 750 miles distant on the 16th and got in sight of the ships in harbour there on the 19th (Feb 1884). We went in towards the reef of coral (in the Red Sea) which surrounded the Harbour and then we could see the EURYALUS's Masts, and the Flag of Admiral Hewett. They signalled us to go to a place called Trinkitat about 90 miles further South, sending the Gunboat RANGER as escort. We got there early on the 19th and had a good day's work surveying the Harbour for to get a safe anchorage. The RANGER being so light went close in and anchored.

20th Feb HMS CARYSFORT arrived and went right in past us. We shipped anchorage nearer the shore and then sent a strong party ashore to build a jetty so as to land horses etc from the ship's boats. They had not been ashore long before the enemy came in sight, when the CARYSFORT fired 3 or 4 shells with good effect. They no doubt thought it was some more of poor Baker Pashas' troops who landed here a few (days) months ago on the same errand as we, but they never got there and the only sign of them is a very good entrenched position and a massacred square.*

February 1884 We waited now for the remainder of the troops to arrive and the SENAPIS was stopped on the way home from India with the 10th Hussars aboard. Transports arrived with a battery of 'Krupps' Guns from Cairo and it was decided to take up a position at Fort Baker, built about 3 miles out to the Front, called after the Builder, Baker's Fort. So they told off the 42nd and 13 of the RMA to take a Krupp Gun and occupy the Fort. So of course it fell to the Flagship's 'Joeys' and Lieutenant

* General Baker - "Baker Pasha" - had commanded Egyptian troops against Osmin Digma and a large force of Arabs, and they were cut to pieces near El Teb on Feb 4th 1884. Baker escaped, and was wounded in the action of 29th Feb 1884. (See Wilkinson's remarks - 'General' Baker's rank was then of a "guide and spy")

Aston took 12 of his own choice, which included poor me.

We made a good start on the 27th (Feb) morning, taking 150 Royal Marines to pull us there at least as far as the Lagoon, which was about 3000 yds, when we were met by the 42nd who "up kilts" and took us through the mud which was about 2 ft 6 inches deep and soft, so we took off trousers and tucked our shirts under our belts and slung rifles and started at a run, but we soon had to stop to pick up two or three who fell and were almost smothered. It was as nice a job as ever I saw in my life, for if one of the leaders had stumbled it would have been certain death for them. We got through with nothing worse than a good coat of mud, and got into the Fort by dinner time, so we put our gun in position and cleaned her up whilst old Osmer and poor Tommy Tustin (killed later in March at Tamai) cooked our dinner for us, and just as we were cutting it up General Graham and Staff arrived. He looked round the desert and told us to open fire on a large body of Arabs about 1800 yards off who were busy digging. So we removed them by a couple of well directed shots loaded by me and fired by a Corporal Addy of the FALCON. So Gerald stopped the firing for the day and told us we were to stand by for he did not know the moment we might be required, then he rode off to camp at Trinkitat.

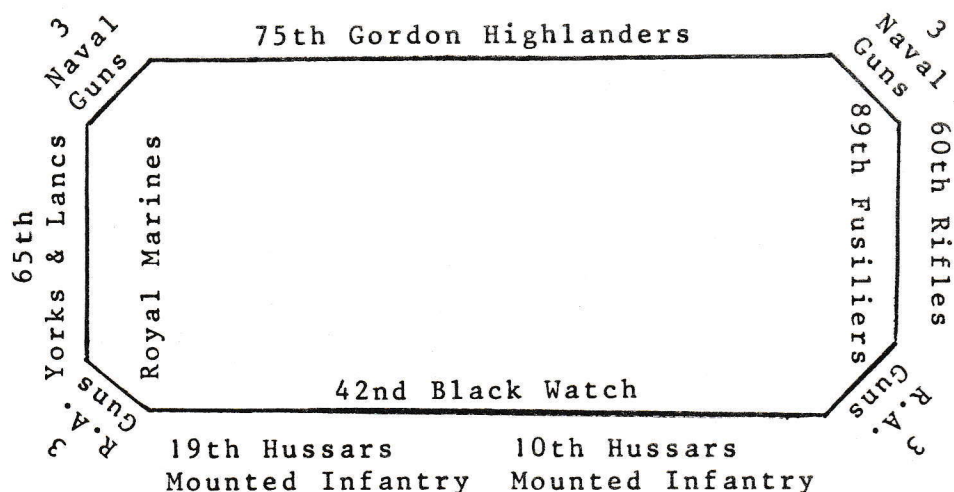
The 42nd found outposts for the night, but we had one sentry in the night to take it in turns. The 42nd christened our Gun, "Freddy Krupp", and we were re-inforced by the R.A. with two 7 pounder Howitzers at night.

The morning dawned of the 28th (Feb 1884). The enemy were in view some hundreds on our left front, so we opened fire on them with filled common shell at 1700 yards, but they came up to 1100 yards, and as we kept on firing they returned into TEB again. This morning one of the General's A.D.C.s came from Trinkitat on horseback and told us he was going with a letter from the General to Osmin Digma and wanted us to cover his advance with Freddy Krupp as long as he was in view. He rode Dutch fearless right into their lines, planted his flag, and as the enemy retired from him he tied his letter to it and galloped off back with a rattling volley at his heels. He got back to safety and found the General and Staff in the Fort. When the General said to him "Well, what did they say" He replied "I could not get him to stop to speak as they retired on my advance". General said "They must take the consequences then, and I shall look to you for the answer". He then went off to camp and ordered one main body to advance to Fort Baker, and camp for the night. So it was all hurry there at once and the Royal Marines were soon on the move towards us and got through the Lagoon before dark so that they had a good start, and for fear of the enemy coming on they had to keep up their trousers so they had a worse job than we had to get through.

The 75th Gordon Highlanders, 60th Rifles, 89th Fusiliers, A.H.C., M.S., R.E. and R.A. all followed in line, leaving the 65th Yorks and Lancasters to disembark and follow with the O.T.C. with the ammunition came up about 11.30 pm, and took up their positions in the square.

To the right of our square lighting great camp fires, and there was a great rejoicing, singing all night, Service songs, bugles

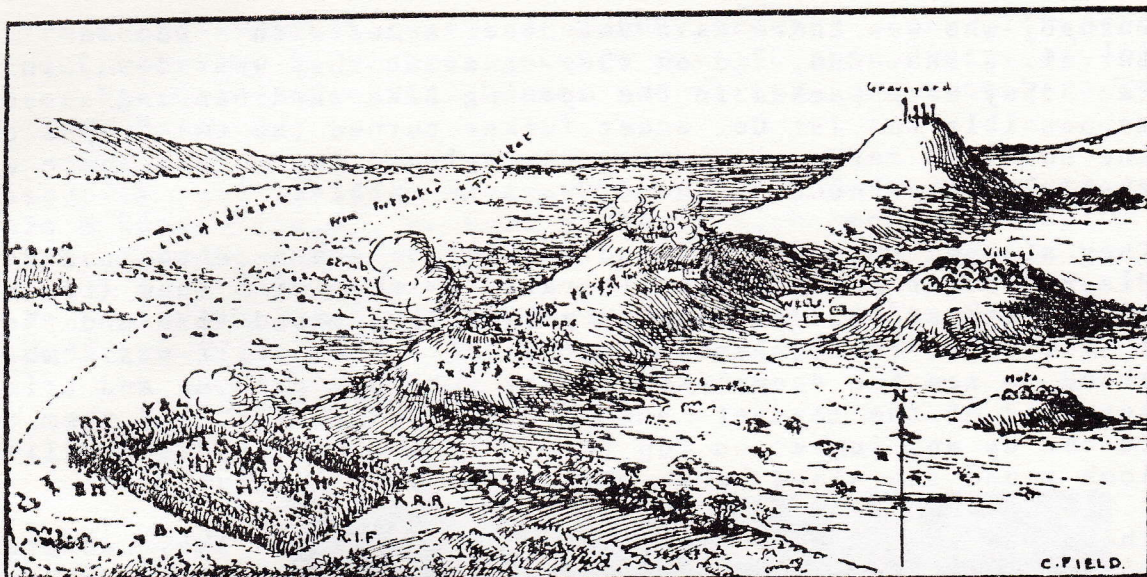
blowing etc., and about 3 a.m. the rain came down in torrents, soaking us through. So they trimmed camp fires in the morning and made the men all stand round and dry their clothes before advancing. They then had some breakfast and at 8 am on the 29th of Feb (1884) the square advanced and formed up for attack about 500 yards off Fort Bakers' Right Front. It was formed thus



They then advanced until they came in sight of the enemy's forts when the General and Staff went to have a look round then formed the plan for attack.

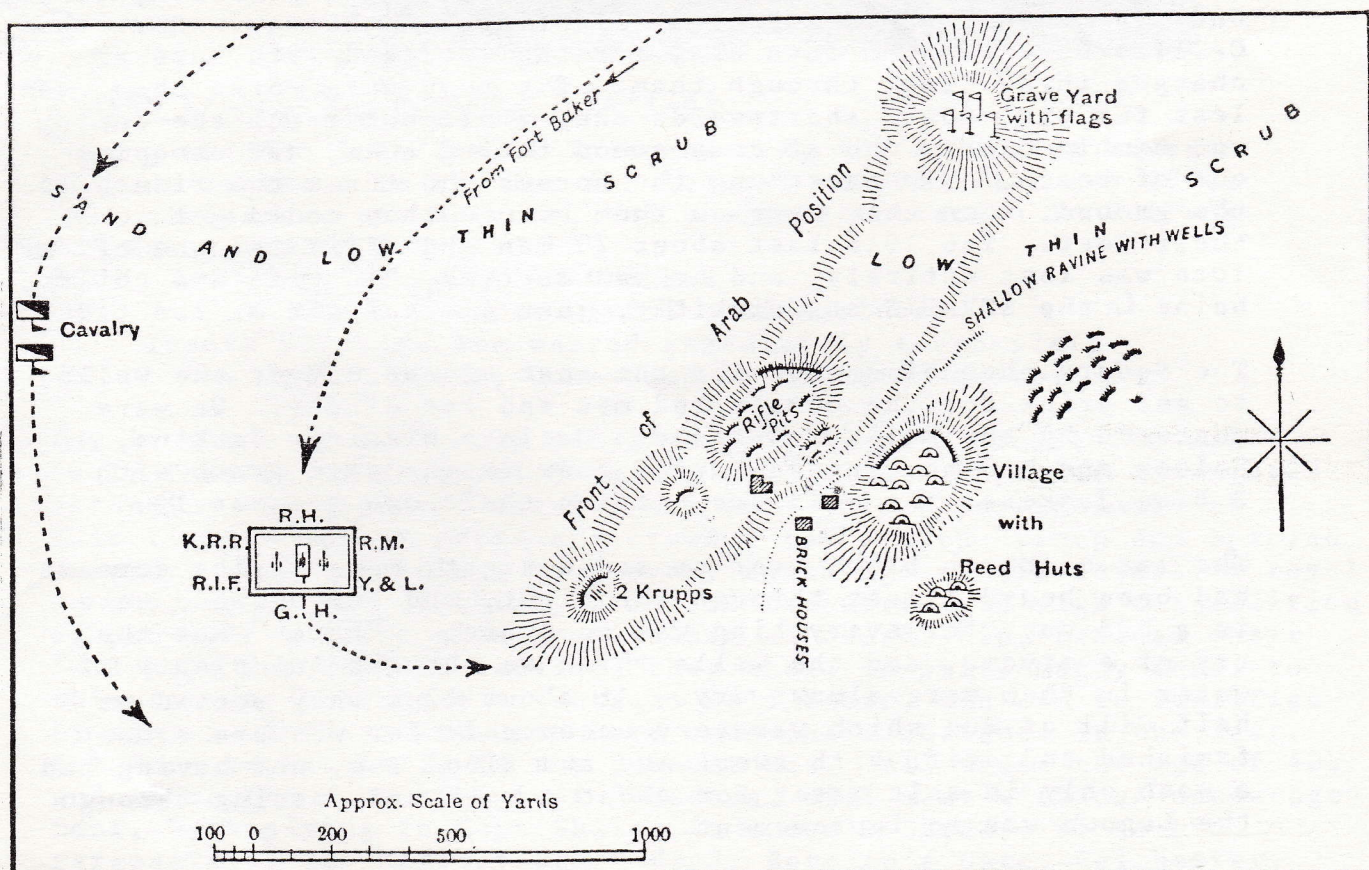
The Square then went towards the right front, which movement completely turned the flank of the Arab Trenches, and the square was at once greeted with a few shells, and well-directed ones too, for they burst in the centre of it and caused no slight commotion with the Camels, Mules and Horses of the T. Corps (Transport Corps) who were inside. But still the square kept advancing without returning any of their fire and it was here that poor Baker was wounded by the splinter of a Bursting Shell in his right eye, but he bore up bravely...his personal ADC, an old Hussar, ran and bandaged it up for him, and he fought on, the object of admiration and pity from all engaged on that day, as he rode with us in the meanest capacity, that of a volunteer spy. The Square had now come up in line with their main position, a kind of Redoubt. When the R.A. was ordered to fire on the enemy's Krupp Guns, of which there was two, inside the Redoubt, and our little 7 pounder soon silenced them. Then they came on at a rush, thinking of doing the same with us as they had done to Baker's Square of Native Army a few weeks before, but luckily for us we had the pleasure of disappointing them, for they got as hot a reception as they would have done in H in U, only a sure one at the point of the Bayonet and Sword which taught them a lesson they who got over it will never forget.

The A and B companies of the R.M.A. then were let out of the Square from keeping the 42nd and 60th from coming back, and had the pleasure of charging the Redoubt and here they showed they had something in them more than the usual display, for they went up the Slope like Devils let loose and poor Jenkins' 12th company was one of the first and as he jumped up they cut off his hands and pulled him inside, cutting him up and we could scarcely recognise him afterwards, the way they mutilated him was something awful - but he was revenged for a party who were led by Captain



SKETCH PLAN OF THE BATTLE OF EL TEB, FEBRUARY 29TH, 1884.

A Plan of the El-Teb battle (bottom) and a sketch of the action (top) - 29 February 1884



Burnaby who was there as a volunteer armed with a Double Barrelled Shot Gun, and as they came out they went down, in fact they were packed in the opening like sardines and as soon as possible the 1st Co. under Tucker turned the two Krupps on the now fast retreating enemy, sweeping a small open space with case shot and fetching them down like rabbits.

They stopped them at last and the Square advanced to an old disused sugar mill and it literally swarmed with them (the enemy) so for almost half an hour they kept up a rapid fire and they rushed up to the Square trying to get inside... it was something grand to see the dauntless bravery for they came up and tried to get hold of the Bayonets and pull them off but two of them even rushed up and jumped on top of a Gatling Gun but did not live to look round the place he so much coveted to get into.

There was an old boiler outside of the mill and they had crept right under the boiler and up the fire hole, when the 75th and 42nd surrounded the old mill and paid off the first death account.

The Square then advanced again to the 2nd Redoubt which contained 2 Krupps, 2 Gatlings and some Rocket Tubes, but they did not know how to use them properly and would not trust the Bank to cover them from our fire, so they came on again with such daring that the 42nd came partly back and would have broke the line of the Square if it had not been for the 65th and the Royal Marines who took up the half lost position, for which they afterwards received great thanks from General Graham.

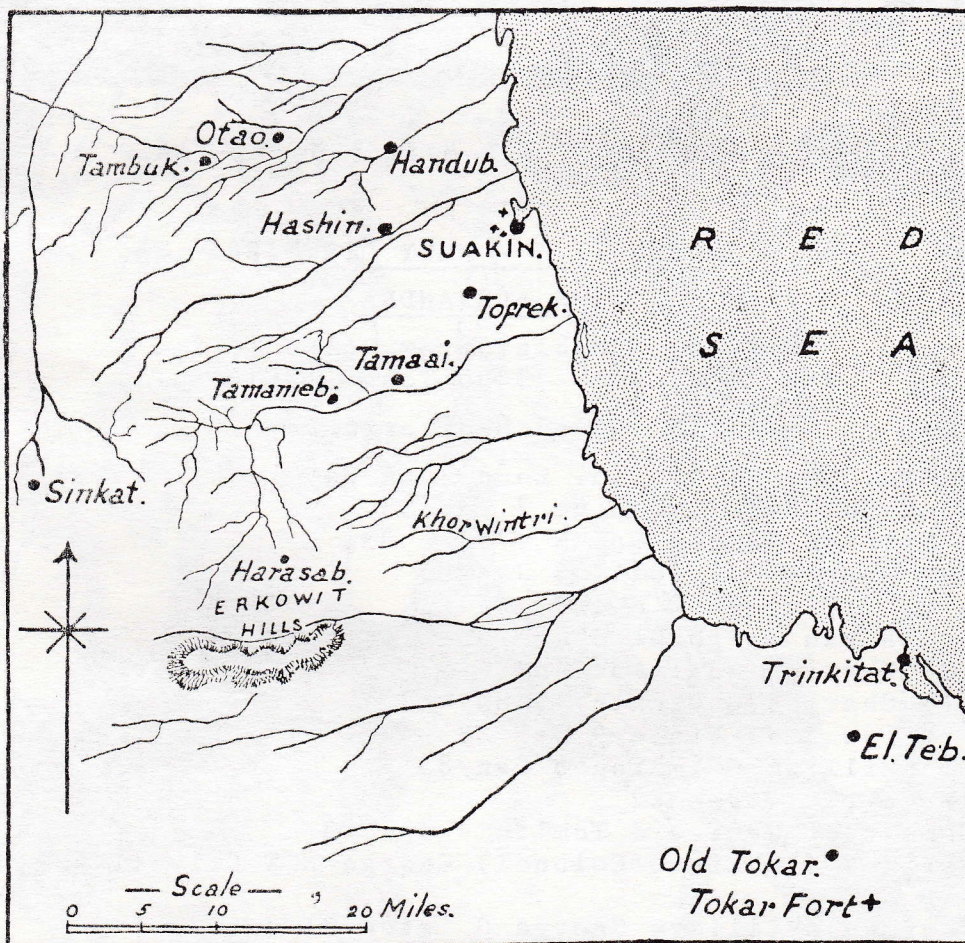
The enemy at once retired fighting hard, and the 42nd, to retrieve their past offence, charged with us and took the position, and at once the enemy turned and fled, fighting all the way. Here the Cavalry were brought into use, for the 10th and 19th Hussars charged three times through them. But they were worse than useless for with their short swords they could not reach the daring and nimble blacks who at once stood facing them, and stooping out of reach, they hamstrung the horses and threw the riders to the ground, when they were on them before they could get to their feet. The 10th lost about 20 men and officers, one of the 10th was lost entirely, and he was married, his wife and children being in the SERAPIS at Trinkitat, just 4 miles off at the time.

The Square then bivouaced for the rest of the day at the wells, to get drink for the horses and men and for dinner. We were mustered by the Roll, and found 3 Marines missing, Jenkins, Holder and McGann, and we buried them in the same grave with 2 Blue Jackets, the Soldiers burying their own separately.

The 1st of March broke over as sad a sight, mens' dying screams had been heard almost through the night, and our wounded were in a bad way, for everything was so scarce. "Water" was the cry of everyone, and the wells which we thought had plenty of water in them were almost dry. At about 12pm they served us half Gill of Rum which was very acceptable for we were almost famished and stiff with sweat mud and Blood too, not having had a wash only in salt water for about a week and passing through the Lagoon was no improvement.

The 1st Batt. of the 75th were left in Company with the First Company of ours to look after and hold the wells and huts of El Teb while the remainder advanced to Tokar. They arrived there in time to save the remnant of the Garrison who had held out, and brought out about 350 poor old withered men, women, and starved children back with them to Trinkitat. They were embarked in 2 transports, and sent off to Suez at once.

The troops then marched back to Fort Baker, and camped outside, and had a feed - $\frac{1}{2}$ pint of coffee and some curried Beef, and mutton, but no water. We then went back to Trinkitat and got orders to embark in HMS HUMBER and SPHYNX for Souakin on the 4th (March 1884) arriving there in 7 hours. We were met by the EURYALUS's Band and marched to the Victoria Camp at the outside of the town nearest Sunkat, formerly Osmin Digma's Slave Market. Our fellows soon demolished it for firewood.



The RMHS are grateful to the National Maritime Museum for making this Journal available to us.

This text has been reproduced exactly as written, using the author's peculiar spelling of SUAKIN. (Editor)



A drawing of the Battle of El-Teb.

APPENDIX A - NAVY LIST 1884

HMS ALEXANDRA

12 guns. Double Screw. Iron Ship.
Armour Plated. 9490 Tons. 8616 H.P.

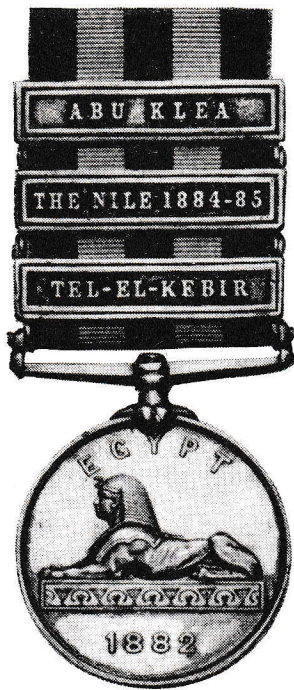
Flagship Mediterranean

Vice Admiral The Right Hon. Lord John Hay KCB 7 Feb 83
Flag Lieut Hon Hugh Tyrwhitt 7 Feb 83
Captain Harry H Ramson CB RN 17 Jan 83
Commander Charles Campbell 8 Jan 83
Lieut Alfred Piggott 2 Nov 82
Lieut Ed. B van Koughnet 8 Jan 83
Lieut (G) Charles Adair 3 Jan 84
Lieut (T) Charles G Dicken 15 May 82
Lieut Rudolph E de Lisle 9 Jan 83
Lieut Hon William Grimston 8 Jan 83
Arthur W Carter 4 Dec 82
Staff Commander George J Tomlin 9 Jan 83
Major Marines (Bt Lieut Colonel) George H T Colwell Apr 83
(23 Aug 83)
Lieut Marines Artillery George G Aston 21 Jan 83
Lieut Marines Douglas J Kysh 21 Jan 83 (RMLI)
Chaplain Rev Pidcock
Fleet Surgeon Henry McDonnell
Surgeon Wm Spencer MD: Arthur Day

The following officers are borne as additional for Transport Services in Egypt:

Commander Charles S Donner 5 Oct 82
Lieut(G) William McMaden borne for special Gunnery Duties etc.

Details of Service for
John Thomas Wilkinson



*Reverse of the
Egypt Medal (1882-9)
issued for both the
Egyptian and Sudan
campaigns.*

Born on 27 October 1860 at St James, LOUTH, Lincolnshire; a joiner by trade who enlisted in the corps on 27 May 1880 at HULL (by Major Moody) and joined the Recruit Depot at WALMER as a Private of the RMA (Royal Marine Artillery) on that same day. His character was then assessed as 'exemplary' and remained 'very good' throughout his career; his height of 5ft 8½in increased by one inch at discharge, whilst his hair and eyes remained brown and his complexion 'fresh'! His home was at 93 Upgate in Louth.

On 8 October he joined 15 Coy RMA (Portsmouth) and embarked in HMS ALEXANDRA on 20 January 1883, in which he remained, following the Sudan episode, until the 7 July 1887, joining HMS THUNDERER the next day for one year. Between periods with his Division ashore he was to serve on two more ships (HMS RUPERT and AUDACIOUS) before being discharged on 10 June 1892, completing a 12 year engagement.

He had been twice wounded (on the 1 and 9 of February 1882) and received the 'EGYPT MEDAL' (issued also for the Sudan campaign) on 25 February 1885, to which were added clasps for

TEL-el-KEBIR, SUAKIN, and TAMAI.

Graded with a 2nd class School certificate at Walmer, and passing infantry, musketry and gunnery courses, he was rated a Bombadier in 'E' Coy from 6 December 1886 until his discharge.

It was again in HULL that Wilkinson re-enlisted on 7 December 1892 rejoining Portsmouth RMA, with his number now changed from 2109 to 4650, as a Gunner. He embarked in HMS TRAFALGAR on 18 April of the following year, from which he transferred to HMS ACHILLES until 4 May 1896, and then HMS NELSON next day for just two weeks.

From then until his second release on 22 November 1901 he served at Headquarters in HMS SULTAN. Now, with five good conduct badges, and his Long Service and Good Conduct Medals awarded on 19 April 1893, he apparently felt ready to settle down, and was married on 20 October 1903. His rank at discharge was Acting Bombadier.

On 7 September 1902 he was put on the Royal Fleet Reserve, and then the outbreak of WWI saw him mobilised yet again, rejoining the RMA from 2 August 1914 until final demobilisation on 31 May 1916, during which time he again served under General Sir George Aston, the Colonel Commandant, as he did in the Sudan.

(Compiled from his Service Documents at the PRO. Ref: ADM 159/23 & 27).

MEMORIES OF A MARINE (Royal Marine Artillery)

(Sudan 1884) Brigadier General Sir George Aston (Page 38)

"We were dressed in tight blue uniforms, with heavy uncomfortable helmets of a foolish shape, pressing on the temples, and giving us no shelter to vital spots from the sun. We had always worn thin Wellington boots with our uniform, and had been obliged to fall back on the stiff hard leather 'ammunition boots', uncommonly (p 39) called 'Pusser's crabs', which we managed to draw in our ships. Our feet were unaccustomed to them, and few of us had learned the trick of soaping socks to avoid sore feet.

The men wore heavy buff leather (pipeclayed) equipment, with stiff shiny black pouches to carry their ammunition. They could only open the covers of the pouches with great difficulty when lying down to fire, and much of the ammunition fell out when they got up. The haversacks were made of thin linen, easily worn through by their contents, and, worst of all, the water bottles were small wooden ones of inferior design, with a very small hole for filling ... and that in a thirsty desert! The water had to be pumped through pipes to canvas tanks on shore, where it evaporated rapidly. It was generally warm, and had a flat and rather oily taste.

We had no transport, but a few water-carts and ammunition mules were lent us by the Army.

The general impression of those Tokar operations, working from Trinkitat as a base, is one of thirst: we only had two pints of water per head per day when we went into the desert, marching in square, and getting the full benefit of the dust raised: and sometimes the stage of thirst was reached when the tongue swells and seems to close up your throat, and then cracks and bleeds. The two pints, allowing for spilling and evaporation, were nearly all used up in cooking and making of tea and cocoa. Washing was not, as a rule, possible."

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LEICESTER AND NOTTINGHAM JOURNAL SATURDAY 24 FEBRUARY 1787

On Saturday morning at ten o'clock came on before Lord Loughborough and a special jury at Westminster hall the trial of an action, in which Lieutenant Charles Bourne late of the Marines was Plaintiff, and the Countess of Crequi, of Walcot Place, Lambeth, defendant for a breach of a promise of marriage. After the Plaintiffs witnesses had been examined Mr Recorder rose, and in a speech of about an hour and a half, stated a variety of observations to show, that nothing had appeared in evidence to prove the promise of marriage, either by express words or implication, and then after a short consultation with his brethren, declared that he would not call a single witness for the defendant but would leave the matter to the court and Jury, as it appeared to them from the Plaintiffs evidence. After a very candid charge from the Noble Judge, the Jury, in less than two minutes brought in a verdict for the Plaintiff with one shilling damages.

