Royal Marines HISTORICAL SOCIETY



THE DUKE OF YORK AND ALBANY'S MARITIME REGIMENT OF FOOT
(The Lord High Admiral's Regiment.) 1664-1684

SHEET ANCHOR Volume XVI Number 2

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THE SHEET ANCHOR

Volume XVI Number 2 *WINTER 1991*

CONTENTS

BARRACK STANCHIONS AND SQUARE NUMBERS

by Frank Agass, BEM 34

CRETE - "INTO BATTLE" - The Fighting Spirit of Britain

submitted by Lieutenant Colin Bowden BEM 42

CRETE - 1941

An Account by Sergeant Charles Bowden 45

EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN -1882 - Part 1

The Journal of Lieutenant W H Palmer RMLI 49

REMINISCENCES OF A WARTIME OFFICER - Part VIII

by Major Patrick D A Ennor RM 55

PLYMOUTH DIVISIONAL BAND IN NORMANDY - 1944

by Squadron Leader E W J Bevan RAF 61

EASTNEY AFTERMATH 64

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Barracks Stanchions and Square Numbers

by Frank Agass BEM *(RMHS)*

During one of my recent visits to Eastney Barracks, when I was taking some overseas visitors to tour the Museum, I took a slow walk round the barracks. I wanted to give myself a nostalgic and personal probe into what is now a ghostlike set of buildings which hold for me the fundemental day to day long lost functions of running a barracks such as Eastney in days of yore.

Not far into my stroll my memory drifted back to the summer of 1938 and I thought of the much under-recorded legion of Marines, with the help of a very few SNCOs who ran the barracks. The same general principle, I'm sure applied to Chatham, Plymouth or Deal, long before Bickleigh, Dalditch and Lympstone were ever thought of.

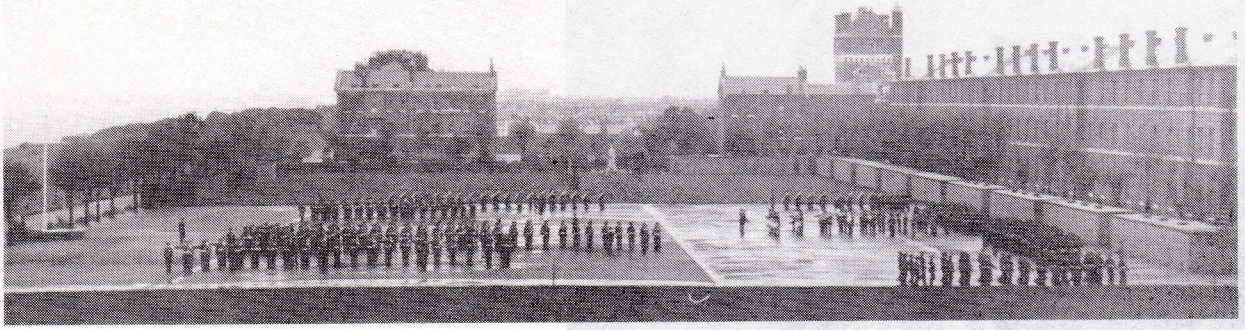
Let us start at the Main Gate with the Guard Room on your right. Opposite the Guard Room was the Coal Yard and straw bedding store under the domain of the Barrackmaster. A nice billet for up to four Marines, who dispensed coal from October to May and straw on bed filling days - the dreaded palliasse - a traumatic experience unless you had a sense of humour. Walk out of there and keep to the left and cross the Recruits Parade to the Recruits Block. Here we met a group of 'Trained Soldiers', one to each room who left a great impression on their charges. Certainly to me, for in personal cleanliness and turnout 'Ned' Kelly will always remain my very first impression of what I would hope to be one day. All the Trained Soldiers in this block were devoted to their job, all were three badgemen and single. There would be about 15 to 20 of them.

Behind the block was the Married Families dispensary manned by a Marine dispenser, an offical and eagerly sought after qualification, assisted by a Matron who must have been there since Dickens' time. To the side of the Dispensary was the Post Office with a Corporal and three Marines complete with a Red Devil bicycle. Tread with care there if you were expecting a parcel from home. Then past the blanco sheds and you entered the rear of Band and Drums Block. What ever did those three badge Buglers do all day long? They arrived from home on their bikes and had a make and mend each day. Perhaps they helped clean the Band Practice Room.

Standing in the corner at the back of the Band and Drums was the School. The staff consisted of a Warant Officer, two Colour Sergeants and three Marines. Many a future NCO rediscovered the secrets of fractions and, dare I say, decimals and trigonometry. Most of us had left school at 14 and it was a struggle, but with much encouragement some of us managed to get our 3rd Class and many our 2nd Class Certificates of Education. We were then educationally qualified for Colour Sergeant. There were some who were brave enough to attempt HET.

Alongside the school was a sort of Parish Hall; once inside you were a brave man who did not end up being confirmed by the Chaplain of the Fleet before you finished recruit training. Sometimes if you were RC or a Jew, you were careful not to offend. Two Marines helped to keep this clean. Just down the path the Corporals Club loomed. This needed a couple of sweepers and a barman, a stepping stone to similar duties in the Sergeants or Officers Mess. Back now to the main road and we found ourselves at the hallowed entrance to the Sergeants Mess. Inside were an unknown number of sweepers, barmen, cooks, waiters and other unclassified workers. Let us not delve too deep, but suffice to say a galaxy of 'nice little numbers'.

Next door stood the Butchers shop, manned of course, by three or four Royal Marine Butchers, a qualification in those days, because every capital ship carried a Marine butcher in its detachment, two in battleships. Married to this shop was the Dry Issue Store where tea, sugar and bread were dispensed. Each barrack room had meals in their own room, no dining halls then. Outliers could also purchase a weekly allowance for home consumption and the mind boggles as to what details were put on the chit that was required to get out of the main gate.



The parade ground of Eastney Barracks, c 1953, showing the morning parade, with the Portsmouth Group Band. Note the air raid shelters that were built during the war and Lumsden Memorial still at the west end of Gunners Lawn.

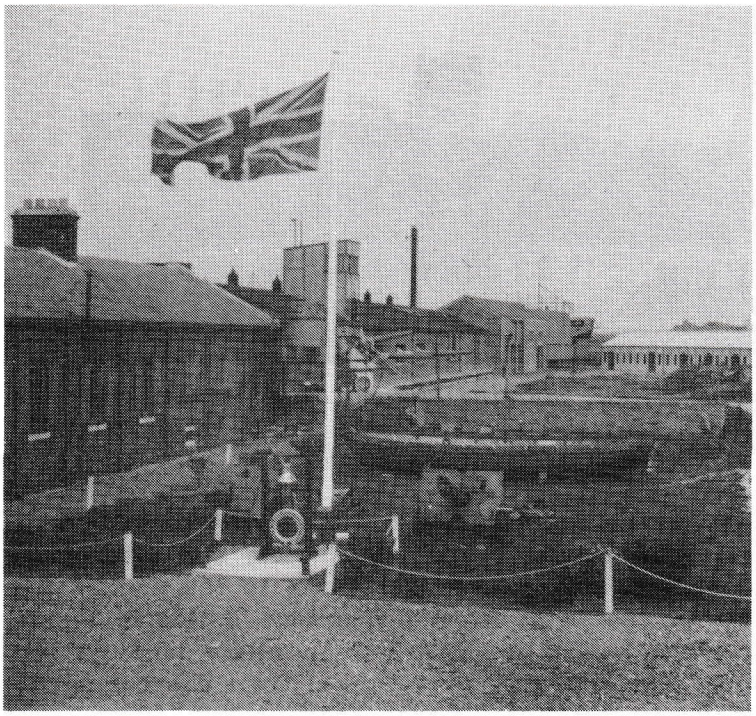
Across the road was a small passageway where the terror of the recruit lurked. Here was the Barbers Shop that scalped you until you became a trained soldier, and afterwards if you did not tip them enough. About six Marines operated there. Along to the end of the passage and a flight of stairs took you up to the Drum Major's quarters. Little is known of what went on there. Back to the main road and past the NAAFI Shop where I bought my first bar of Imperial Leather soap, and have been using it ever since. Turn the corner to the Wet Canteen. A more depressing place for a jovial time I never did see. Not outstanding for its decor or fittings, it was run by an old Sergeant with a staff of three or four barmen and cleaners, all Marines. I cannot give you a true description of the place except to add that there was a sort of hall with a stage where I suppose many a 'sods opera' was performed. But it did not enter into my life as a recruit too much.

Across an opening you could see the Band Practice Room with the outdoor squash courts built into the rear of the theatre. The Globe Theatre was a very sparse place inside, very functional but it did provide a good billet for those with the inclination to act the part or just get settled into a two year appointment as a sweeper. I did not mention before that most of the square numbers carried an appointment of two years and the Drafting Office lost your card for that time. Some were lost for ever, I think!

The Gymnasium next door provided the means for a varied group, sports gear upkeepers, groundsmen, gym sweepers and tea boys. The PTIs seemed to have plenty of time to drink tea. Now across the road again to where a very exclusive group of Marines

The old Sergeants Mess, adjacent to the Drill Shed laid out for a formal dinner.





The Royal Marines School of Gunnery.

resided. The grooms who cared for the chargers on behalf of the Adjutant and others. It later became the MT Office, but you can still see the stables where the grooms lived above. It was a brave Sergeant Major who dared touch one of the grooms for guard or inlying picquet.

We now approached the horror of the Detention Quarters. Built behind a very high wall, they reminded you of Kingston Prison in another part of the city. I never lingered there long. There was no need for fatiguemen and sweepers there, but the SNCOs who worked there looked upon it as an EVT course for an appointment later in the RNDQs in the Dockyard. Alongside the wall of the DQs was the Shoemakers Shop. Now here was a ready made Dickens setting for any hard up film director. A long dark and dingy building, strewn with old machines with Marines dressed in dirty leather aprons working over ancient lasts to produce our boots. For all our boots were made in this building. There were vast mountains of leather, dyes and all the accroutrements that went into the making of boots. My impression was of sallow and sorry folk who worked there; I think a couple even slept there.

Away from there past the Provost Sergeant's and RSM's houses. This was another area where we did not linger. Down through the gates and into the playing fields with the Sports Pavilion on the right. Here some of the legions from the PRI's staff lurked when wishing to be out of the limelight. The proper use by visiting and home teams was a tolerated nuisance, and did not disturb things like tea and sandwich making, not to mention the betting slips that were in process of compilation for the pressing room. The grandstand that stood on the roadway needed reserved seats for Wednesdays, all major matches took place on a Wednesday - it was make and mend day.

I will only progress as far as the Sea Service Battery, as Fort Cumberland beyond was a law unto itself. So was the Gun Battery for that matter. Very up market it had within its ranks the crême de la crême of the Corps at that time. Armourers, spotting top team, magazine workers, hydraulic press operators, storemen and last but not least the mystic man who lived and worked in the Rangefinder and Sea Service training hut on the rise just in front of the swimming baths. Here was taught the secrets of naval expressions and, more important, how to lash up a hammock, especially as 80% of the Corps were at sea in 1938. Marines virtually lived in all the nooks and crannies of the Battery, and some were on Lodging and Victualling Allowance of about 4/6d a day. Not that they lodged and victualled anywhere except in the Battery. They were silent figures who did not wish to become too well known in other parts of Eastney. I would say that about twenty Marines were involved there.

We now pass the Swimming Baths where I was taught to swim and make our way back into the main barracks and on the way pop into the Infirmary or Sick Bay. Nothing so grand as a Medical Centre which might have given you the confidence to enter if you were really ill, it was designed to keep you away! A freezing cold concrete floored waiting room with a metal duct cover that rattled announced your arrival. All the staff with the exception of the Doctors (RN) and the seamstress were Marines including the cooks with their own galley and the dispensers. These were highly trained and skilled. There was also on the staff a Marine who de-bugged your kit if you attracted any vermin; if you caught scabies it meant your whole kit had be taken to the steam room at the Infirmary for treatment. It did not do your highly polished boots and brasses any favours. A special stretcher-like trolley was used to transport your kit, so all and sundry became aware that you needed a bell for a few weeks after the treatment. It was sad that only the clean ones caught these dreadful anti-social complaints.

We now move from this dismal building facing the sea. Keeping along the Eastney Fort West Road we approached a more cheerful spot, the Boathouse, where there was a professional team of seamanlike chaps dressed in blue serge trousers and singlets akin to PTIs. The boathouse was where the skills of boat pulling were taught as part of our sea service training. You can still see the concrete slipway that had steel runners along which the boats were launched into the sea. Cutters and whalers, the main sea boats of the Navy, were to be seen bobbing about, moored ready to receive the innocents from London, the Midlands and far flung corners of the UK and British Empire. Boat pulling was a serious business and the staff that manned the boathouse were very professional people, having spent most of their time at sea. The sergeant wore red stripes, for he was one of the few Lance Sergeants still appointed. The big effort came on Friday afternoons when the boats were returned to the boathouse by a winch with one Marine standing in the middle of the sea road controlling the traffic. He did not have too much of a problem in 1938, but today would be rather different.

Leaving our happy band at the Boathouse, we move to the Officers Mess, avoiding the Parade Ground. Who would dare to cross that unless you were undergoing punishment by an MTI? Why did they rename them Drill Leaders? You passed under the centre arch below the main entrance and entered a completely different world. Mess Butlers with under their command chefs (not cooks), MOAs, silvermen, hall keepers, wine waiters, cellarmen, barmen - the list was endless, but in those days of luxury living it was the norm, and of course many of us remember the early morning fatigues when hoards of young men first saw the glamour and awe of the Officers Mess. 20 or 30 were not an uncommon number to arrive to scrub and polish before the incumbents arrived for breakfast.

Go out of the rear of the Mess and walk towards the Drill Shed. To the left there was the main block consisting of A, E, I and N Companies, the sources of supply for all the sweepers, dutymen and fatiguemen of the barracks. Company Sergeants Major dispensed to their staffs the orders for the day, posted draft chits and to assist them they had a small Company Staff. In those days there would be a Company 'Q', two to four storemen and a company clerk. Outside the Company office would be the servery for the food that was taken at mealtimes to the barrack rooms - no dining halls then. In comparison with the rest of the barracks the Company staff was fairly small but their main power existed in the allocation of manpower for the rest of the barracks.

Look to the right in the Drill Shed and there was the functional, recreational and domestic pulse of the barracks. The first was the communal heads with seating for up to 20, including a running water trough, no doors but a good supply of Pussers' brown. Adjacent to the heads was the communal washplace. You needed to walk across the Drill Shed to wash and take relief. The drill shed was used for parades when the weather was wet so for those whose duties allowed them to get up late, they had special dispensation to open the night heads on the barracks landings. In the washplace, lurking in his self made store caboose was a heads and bathroom sweeper, who was in sole command. Trying to get a wash after 8.15 without a chit was courting disaster. The hose was the main source of cleaning with a powerful jet which was directed onto the walls and ceilings of the cubicles. Otherwise there was a quick slop round with a cloth over the tip-up wash bowls.



The Library and Reading Room.

Next door was the Pressing Room. In no way dare you cross the four Marines who ran this place. In conjunction with the bathroom sweepers they ran the organisation for accepting betting slips for the day and paying out for yesterday. A Mafia all of its own.

A few yards further down the Drill Shed a small door led to the Infantry Instruction Room. It was really a hideout for MTIs where the First Drill reigned supreme. Of course a sweeper was needed here mainly to make tea and run errands, not too much sweeping. It was in that room that any Court Martial was conducted, the only time the RSM set foot in it. Further down the drill shed a set of double doors opened to the NAAFI coffee shop that sold sticky buns and eggs and chips. It was in this canteen that I had my first meal in the Corps. On the evening of arrival, recruits would be given an egg and chips supper. I didn't understand for some years why, when I discovered the Recruits' dining hall was closed at 1830 and had no means of providing casual meals. A very nice number was the canteen sweeper's, a constant flow of goodies and pretty girls to dispense them. Many a NAAFI girl married her target from here.

Stretching upwards from the main entrance was an impressive staircase that divided in two, one stairway going to the Billiards Room and the other to the Library and Reading Room. Duties here were a comfortable number, the Billiards Room providing work for four markers; iron the tables in the morning, polish the surrounds and as much free play as you could wish as no-one was allowed to play until 1200 noon. They also had to keep the stairway clean as the UIF Sergeant, who was their boss, had his office there. Who could but envy the Reading Room sweepers? Plush, real leather chairs, the likes of which most of us had never seen before, all the papers of the day, periodicals and a massive library which I fear was not appreciated until you were beyond the legibility to use it. Further down the Drill Shed we met another set of washrooms and heads with the sound of running water being constantly heard.

The Billiards Room.





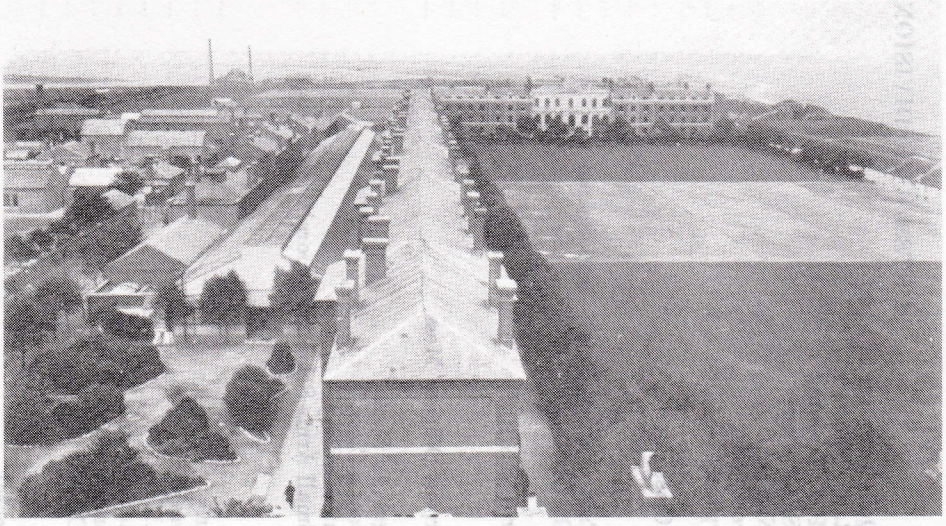
The Drill Shed

The western exit from the Shed found us opposite the Pay Office, a hive of pay clerks bent over ledgers, with a line of anxious marines hoping their quarterly settlement would be a big one. There was a special waiting area for the payment of S542s (Expense Claim and Travelling Allowance) which only the well informed knew of this legal way of getting out of pocket expenses. The Imprest Holder (Cashier) and his staff would toal about 20.

Turn left towards the sea along the Orderly Room road, past the Lumsden Memorial and we came to Portsmouth Division Headquarters.Here there were a host of records clerks and Commandants staff who all had their own clerks. I have to confess the only time I went into this bastion of power before the war was to take my oath and place my details before the records clerk who opened my Service Certificate. You were aware of an impressive building with about 30 people working there. Housed in the rear of this building was the Adjutant's house, with his groom, MOA and cook who had cosy billets. Pass along in front of Teapot Row with the splendour of the buildings and tennis courts adjacent. Beyond was the Officers Mess fruit and vegetable garden, one laid aside for the Colonel Commandant. Servants galore worked there.

Return to Orderly Room road, a hive of serious looking staff all beavering away. It housed the CO, Adjutant, FOGD, 2 i/c, the RSM, Movements and all the staff to administer

The pre-war barracks taken from the clock tower



An extract from General Orders for 1933 showing just some of the square numbers that were available in Eastney. These were the ones becoming vacant in 1934/35

160.—List of Divisional Appointments with and without extra pay, which will probably become vacant during the period 1st April, 1934—31st March, 1935.

Nature of Appointment.	Amount of extra duty pay. s. d.	Date on which it will probably become vacant.
PORTSMOUTH DIVISION.		
Clerk, 2nd Quartermaster's Dept.	0 6	1.4.34
N.C.O. i/c Range Markers	—	8.4.34
Q.M.S.I. of P.R. Training	—	13.4.34
Q.M.S.I. of Small Arms	—	26.4.34
Q.M.S.., M.N.B.D.O.	—	26.4.34
Butler, Officers' Mess	1 0	27.4.34
Barrack Carpenter	1 0	1.5.34
Pioneer	—	1.5.34
M.T.I., 2nd Class (M.)	0 6†	9.5.34
Pioneer	—	27.5.34
Cook	0 6	29.5.34
N.C.O. for Camp Duties, Small Arms School	—	1.6.34
Divisional Gardener	25 0 per month§	3.6.34
Gun Armourer (S.S.)	1 0	9.6.34
C.S.M.	—	18.6.34
Pioneer	—	26.6.34
Waiter, Warrant Officers' Mess	15 0 per month§	30.6.34
Waiter, Sergeants' Mess	0 6§	1.7.34
Boatman, Boat's Crew	—	6.7.34
Commandant's Orderly	—	10.7.34
Armourer, Small Arms School (Corporals or Sergts.)	1 0 or 1 3	11.7.34
Cook	0 6	18.7.34
School Orderly	—	22.7.34
Cook (Corporal)	0 6	23.7.34
Company Q.M.S.	—	29.7.34
Clerk, Barrackmaster's Dept.	1 0	30.7.34
Cook (Company)	0 6	8.8.34
M.T.I., 1st Class (P.)	1 0†	10.8.34
C.S.M.	—	19.8.34
Cook	0 6	21.8.34
Pioneer Corporal	—	23.8.34
Labourer, School of L.A.	—	3.9.34
Marker	—	7.9.34
Cook (Company)	0 6	8.9.34
Postman	—	10.9.34
Pioneers (Two)	—	13.9.34
Gun Armourer (S.S.)	1 0	16.9.34
Lamplighter (Electrician)	1 0	23.9.34
Coxswain, Boat's Crew	—	24.9.34
Engineman (Swimming Bath)	1 0	25.9.34
Pioneer, Fort Cumberland	—	27.9.34
Assistant Cook, Officers' Mess	1 0	29.9.34
Marker, Small Arms School	—	13.10.34
Boatman, Boat's Crew (Two)	—	13.10.34
M.T.I. (P.), 2nd Class	0 6†	18.10.34
Clerk, 1st Quartermaster's Dept.	0 6	27.10.34
M.T.I. (M.), 1st Class	1 0†	7.11.34
Cook, Officers' Mess, Small Arms School	20 0§ per month	9.11.34
Pioneer, Fort Cumberland	—	14.11.34
Cook, Fort Cumberland	0 6	14.11.34
Cook	0 6	16.11.34
Mess Sergeant, Officers' Mess	2 0	21.11.34
Groundsman	25 0§ per month	21.11.34
Marker, Small Arms School	—	24.11.34
Cook	0 6	30.11.34
Q.M.S., Barrackmaster's Dept.	—	3.12.34
Q.M.S.I. of Gunnery (Mobile Wing), School of L.A.	—	3.12.34
Storeman, 1st Quartermaster's Dept.	—	7.12.34
Blacksmith	1 0	14.12.34
Marker, Small Arms School	—	15.12.34
Marker, Small Arms School	—	30.12.34
Marker	—	2.1.35
M.T. Driver	0 9‡	2.1.35
Demonstrator, Small Arms School	—	6.1.35
Company Q.M.S.	—	7.1.35
Clerk, Small Arms School	—	8.1.35
Coalmeter Man	—	14.1.35
Q.M.S., 1st Quartermaster's Dept.	—	15.1.35
Marker, Small Arms School	—	18.1.35
Marker	—	23.1.35
Q.M.S.I. of Infantry	—	28.1.35
Boatman, Boat's Crew	—	31.1.35
Artificer, R.A., School of L.A.	1 0	1.2.35
Signalling Instructor	0 6	11.2.35
M.T. Driver	0 9‡	14.2.35
Pioneer Sergeant	—	22.2.35
Boatman, Boat's Crew	—	6.3.35
Marker	—	19.3.35
Boatman, Boat's Crew	—	27.3.35

the barracks. Clerks abounded and it was here that I first learned the term 'Gofer'. For sitting in the Orderly Room Sergeant's office were all the non-allocated JNCOs, awaiting the command of the Colour Sergeant in charge to be despatched on a variety of messages and errands. Hence the expression 'Gofer this' or 'Gofer that'; being a Gofer boy was not the most exciting duty for an ambitious JNCO. I reckoned some 25 jobs were found there.

A few yards further down the road and we came to the Mecca of Barracks Stanchions, the 1st QM's department. Storemen dealt with fitting you out for your first uniform, marking your kit, making the type you used to do so, helmet fitting and web gear which was issued with relish particularly if it was brand new. Did you ever count how many items there were in the 1908 pattern, or how many brasses there were to clean? Ground sheets, sea kit bag and brown kit bag were all marked, setting you off on a good course. Two Marines in the fitting rooms were certainly there during the whole of my service - 27 years. Bars to LS & GC Medals were the norm in this department and 'upstairs for your trousers' was a constant daily cry. Further up the stairs was the Tailor's Shop staffed by another group of long standing Marines. Here you watched in wonder as the Master Tailor or his Sergeant made marks with chalk all over your new uniforms, which all turned out well in the end. My impression was a dedicated group who knew the inside of the task they were responsible for. There must have been 30 Marines there and they were jewels in the crown of appointments and square numbers.

Walk a few yards towards the Main Gate and turn left ino a small backwater of the barracks which housed the Barrackmaster, the Armourers' Shop and the Printers' Shop, with storerooms that never seemed to be open. These secured the Barrackmaster's stores, not frequented by the uninitiated with secrets known only to the staff. More Dickensian types worked here, quiet and hoping that the Drafting Office was content with the furniture they provided! The smell of oil wafted across the road from the Armourer's Shop with its racks of new rifles ready for issue to the most recent recruit squad. The armourers measured you for the length of butt for your rifle, which was to remain with you for the rest of your career with your name on the rifle butt disc and pullthrough. A serious group worked in this shop. Having been a printer before I joined, I was interested in the Printers' Shop around the next corner with white aproned Marines and SNCOs busy with type and paper producing a variety of work for the barracks and other Naval establishments in the Portsmouth area. The equipment was fairly ancient. The Clock Tower area must have taken toll of some 50 Marines, all offices having their own sweeper.

And now we walk round the corner towards the Guard Room and back out of the Main Gate. Here were the Provost Sergeant, who policed the barracks with his small staff and administered the Detention Quarters. Here also were the cells and the new Guard, preparing the dinner, and what a dismal place it was. Finally there was the Sergeant on the gate, the final bastion that had to be fought before you managed to get ashore.

Walking back down Henderson Road, I realise I have missed a very small but important person, the Church Sweeper/Verger. I recall him to be a very serious person who doubled as MOA to the Padre. On Sundays he took charge of the seating for Church Parade in full No 1s wearing his First World War medals.

So, farewell to Eastney. There are many small corners I am sure I have missed; and can you work out how many serving personnel it took to make the barracks work smoothly in 1938?

Abbreviations:

EVT	Educational and Vocational Training
FOGD	Field Officer General Duty
HET	Higher Educational Test
LS & GC	Long Service and Good Conduct
MOA	Marine Officer's Attendant
MTI	Military Training Instructor
PRI	President Regimental Institute

The following is a transcription of a BBC Forces Programme broadcast of 15th August 1942, describing an escape from Crete which happened 50 years ago.....

"INTO BATTLE"

The Fighting Spirit of Britain

'By Land & By Sea'

From an account by Bartimeus

B.B.C. Forces Programme. Saturday 15th August 1942.

F/U DRUM ROLL AND LILLIBULLERO

Announcer: Into Battle! The fighting spirit of Britain!

Tonight we present the story of 6 officers and 134 other ranks:- Royal Marines, Australians, New Zealanders, and Commando men - who fought their way out of Crete, and by their own efforts, reached the coast of Africa to join the British Forces there, and fight again.

(F/U Machine gun and shelling: down for:)

Soldier No 1 Not much longer now, shouldn't think!

Soldier No 2 No most of the chaps must have gone down to the beaches.....

(Machine gun)

Soldier No 1 Won't be long before we get there, going to get pushed right off the blinking cliffs if we're not careful.

Soldier No 2 Well mate, I could do with a swim. It's a bit too hot for my liking. How much longer's it going to be?

Soldier No 1 How many more Jerries are there to knock off? Ask me another?

(Machine gun up and out)

Narrator Crete.....at the end of May 1941. The improvised Royal Marine Battalion that had formed part of the rearguard fought to the last, knowing how slender were their chances of rescue.

Marine Eventually reaching the beach at Sphakia too late for the last lift the battalion was disbanded by Major R Garrett, Royal Marines, on 31st May, by the order of the senior Army officer ashore. Major Garrett, having carried out his instructions, then made it be known that he would never allow himself to be taken prisoner, and that he intended to find a boat and make his way to Africa.

Soldier No 1 *(with gentle sarcasm)* Sounds alright, don't it? Just find a boat and make your way to Africa - it was only between two and three hundred miles - but we was on, of course, we had a sporting chance.

Soldier No 2 Besides we're Marines, don't forget, land or sea it's all one to us.

Marine According to Major Garrett's report his troops were exercised in seamanship, and having made his purpose plain to his famished and exhausted men, he set off in search of a boat, and in the bay found an abandoned landing craft. Swimming off to her he found a wire foul of the port screw, and the engines incapacitated. She had, however, some provisions on board, and appeared to be seaworthy. Major Garrett then went in search of an engineer, and eventually in the ruins of the bombed

village he found one, T. Lester, a Lance Corporal of the 2/7 Australian Battalion, who had been a mechanic in civil life and was still game for anything. On their way off to the craft they were joined by another Australian, Lieutenant K.R. Walker, and between them they got life into the engine, and finally warped the craft inshore.

Narrator — Major Garrett called for volunteers to join him on his desperate venture.

Marine — It was the last rally of the Royal Marines on Crete. To his stouthearted "Who goes home?" five officers and one hundred and thirty four other ranks responded. They included Royal Marines, Australians, New Zealanders and men from Commandos. They collected all the petrol, water containers and rations they could lay their hands on, and a complete muster was made of all their resources.

Soldier No 1 — Then we had a good dinner - our first proper meal for three days - followed by a substantial supper, a last drink at the well, and a top-up of every water container. Major Garrett had somehow contrived to find a map of the Eastern Mediterranean, and Lieutenant R.R. Macartney of the 3rd Field Regiment of the A.I.F. had a map of North Africa. With these two aids to navigation they set course for Tobruk, 180 miles distant, which they knew to be in our hands. They had, of course, no sextant, no knowledge of the compass deviation, no log or chronometer, or means of calculating the set of currents. They estimated they had enough petrol for 140 miles. At 9.30 pm on 1st June they cast off.....

Marine — They lost two hours during the night repairing the steering gear which broke down. An experiment with diesel fuel in one engine, in an attempt to save petrol, merely resulted in the engine 'packing up'. The other broke down in sympathy shortly afterwards. Undaunted by the contrariness of the machine, Major Garrett made plain sail, the canvas being furnished somewhat inadequately by the winch cover. This just enabled them to keep the craft on her course.

Narrator — The 2nd June.....

Marine — The sea rose and seasickness overwhelmed them. The devoted engineroom staff continued, however to strip down the engine and clear it of dieselite, which enabled them to get under way again until 6pm when their petrol was exhausted. All that night they wallowed under their rag of sail in a heavy sea.

Narrator — On the 3rd June.....

Marine — They were rationed to 1/6th of a pint of water, a 1½ inch square of bully beef and half a ship's biscuit. They burned flares at night, using diesel oil as fuel. In two days they produced four and a half gallons of drinking water which was hoarded for emergencies.

Narrator — At 7.45 on the morning of the 4th June.....

Marine — A Blenheim aircraft sighted them and circled them twice, This heartened everybody. They were getting very weak. The engineers busied themselves in changing the port clutch and gear box with the starboard, which was slipping and they ran the engine for half an hour in the evening to keep up their spirits.

Narrator — On the next day, the 5th June.....

Marine — Still unable to sight land, they used up the rest of the petrol hoping to lift the African coast, but when the engine petered out it was still the same horizon of waves heaving against the lonely sky to the south of them. Marine Harding built a raft of diesel oil drums, with floor boards as paddles and a raft party volunteered to go and look for Africa and fetch help, but their craft was too unstable and the project had to be abandoned.

Next day they rigged a canoe, but it would only take one man and they were too weak for a single-handed task. That too was given up.

Narrator — For the next three days they devoted all their energies to sailing the landing craft. They contrived to make four blankets into a jib and six into a mainsail. A Marine named Yeo distinguished himself as a sailmaker. The craft refused to answer her helm, and yawed despairingly. To wear ship it was necessary for these exhausted men to plunge overboard in small parties, and by swimming with all the energy left in them, push the bows round on to the proper course again. They had two Colour Sergeants and one Sergeant of the Royal Marines on board. The former were old timers, the latter 'Hostilities Only'. Between them they heartened and sustained that clamjamfray of armed scarecrows, bearded and gaunt and hollow-eyed, crowded together on the sungrilled plates of a landing craft.

The senior, Colour Sergeant C.A. Dean, was the craft's Sergeant Major, a combination of Master-at-Arms and Purser, issuing the meagre ration of water with stern impartiality. His fellow Colour Sergeant, H.C. Colwill, organised the watches on board and constituted himself a sort of sailing master, which involved leading the swimming party into the water whenever it was necesary to steady the craft on her course. Sergeant Bowden helped his seniors in these various activities. As a 'Hostilities Only' marine he was probably not expected to be familiar within the routine of sailing the high seas in a square-nosed landing craft that refused to answer her helm and was propelled by blankets, and kept on her course by swimmers, towards the coast that they might never reach in time. It must be supposed that he just picked it up as he went along.

At 5.45 pm on the 8th June.....

Marine — They sighted land. At 1.30 am on the 9th they ran on to a sandy beach. Lieutenant Macartney and Sergeant Bowden were landed with orders to move south in the hope of striking the Sollum road. Sergeant Bowden reappeared after some hours. He announced they were beached 17 miles west of Sidi Barrani, which was the Headquarters of the 1st Royal Marine A.A. Regiment, and motor transport had been arranged for the following morning. He had found his way back across five miles of desert, in the dark, and without a compass. The Colour Sergeants must have agreed that one way and another Sergeant Bowden showed promise.

Narrator — The following morning, the 10th, Major Garrett marched his force across five miles of desert to where the lorries awaited them. It is appropriate that the story should end here - with a little band of the Unbeaten trudging scross the sand, their shadows shortening as the sun rose higher; they were still led by the man who had taught them that life and defeat cannot be co-existent, a man whose Corps Motto was 'Per Mare, Per Terram'.

* * * * * * * * *

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There is a more detailed description of this story in James Ladd's 'The Royal Marines - 1919-1980', pages 103-4, based on Major Garrett's action report.

Yugoslav Command

From an officers S 206 of World War 2:

Capable, thorough and energetic. A most reliable and level headed officer. Very young for his age, physically fit and mentally alert. He has done extremely well in charge of a Royal Marine Detachment guarding the Naval Armament Depot at Lake Timsah. Since the withdrawal of the Detachment he has supervised a detachment of Royal Yugo-Slavs who replaced the Royal Marines.

The following account written in the third person by Sergeant Charles Bowden amplifies the BBC broadcast on Crete.

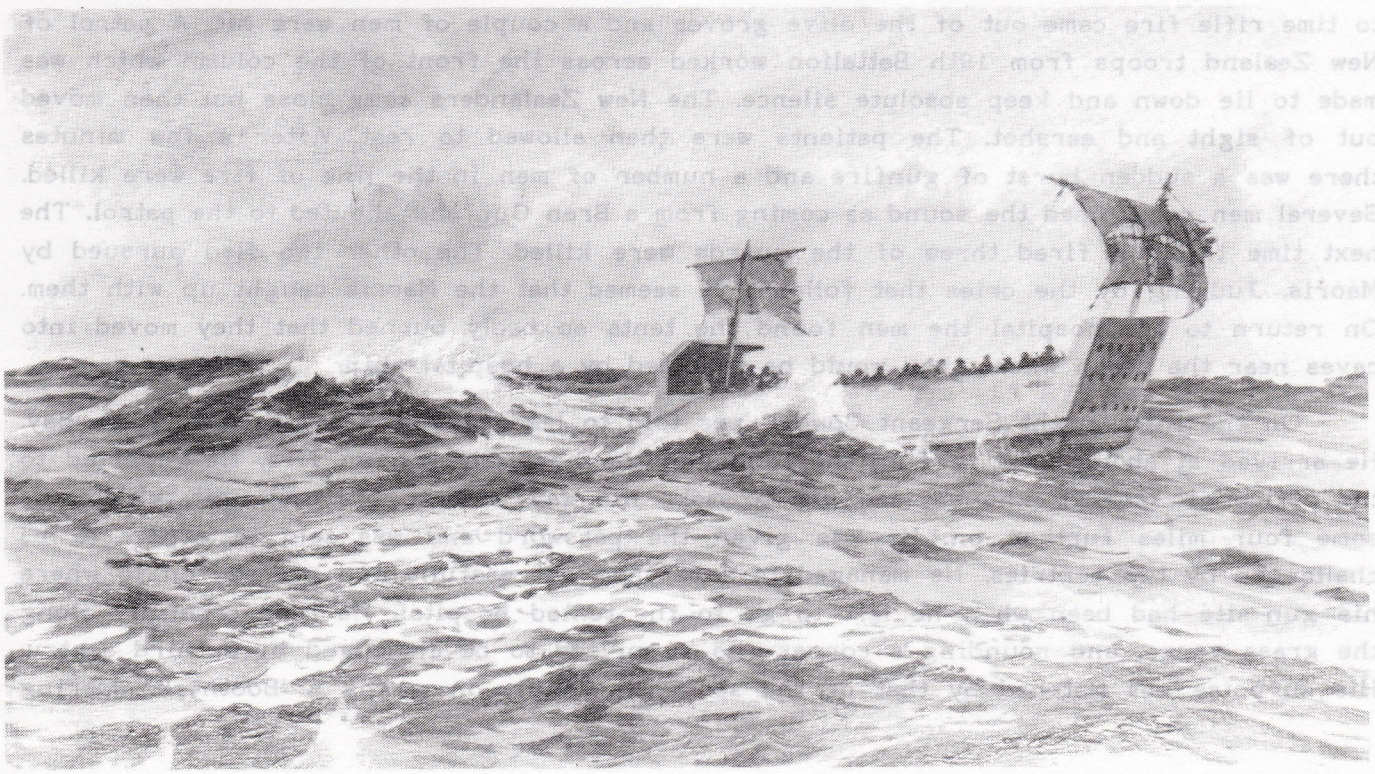
Crete - 1941

An Account by Sergeant Charles Bowden *(later Drum Major)*

Charles Bowden joined the Royal Marines on 15th April along with many other 'conscripts'. He came from a Royal Marines family and as a boy had been in the Royal Marine Cadets at Portsmouth. He quickly gained recognition and in three months was promoted Acting Temporary Sergeant. He was attached to C Battery, MNBDO 1 (Mobile Naval Base Defence Organisation), helping to man anti-aircraft guns during the Battle of Britain. Early in April 1941 MNBDO 1, under Maj-Gen E C Weston was sent to Alexandria, but after the evacuation of Greece became necessary, it was then sent to Crete. After weeks at sea, first in the troopship *Bergensford* and then in SS *Canterbury*, C Battery landed on Crete on 10th May 1941. About a week later Bowden was in a tented hospital suffering from dysentery.

The German airborne invasion started on 20th May. Troop gliders landed and para-troops dropped from low flying troop carriers. One troop of parachutists landed just south of 7 General Hospital which, although clearly marked with Red Crosses, had been identified by the Germans simply as a tented camp. The patients who could walk, including Sergeant Bowden, had taken cover in slit trenches and a nearby cave, as the tents were raked by machine-gun fire. At about noon the patients, wearing only pyjamas and boots, were rounded up by the Germans, and told that they would be marched to a place where they would be picked up and taken by air to Greece for hospital treatment. With their hands up they set

A photograph of the painting 'The Unbeaten' by Lt Cdr Rowland Langmaid RN which depicts Major Garrett's landing craft under sail during the epic journey across the Mediterranean. It hangs in the Officers Mess of RM Poole



The Band of the Royal Marines School of Music with Drum Major Charles Bowden at the helm. He was the Drum Major from the late 1940s until he retired in 1975.



Drum Major Charles Bowden BEM



off in a southerly direction with 5 guards. One man's pyjamas began to slip down - he lowered his hands to pull them up and was shot dead.

Soon after they set off, a German aircraft swept down and fired several bursts from its machine guns. They moved off the road and continued through broken country. From time to time rifle fire came out of the olive groves and a couple of men were hit. A patrol of New Zealand troops from 19th Battalion worked across the front of the column which was made to lie down and keep absolute silence. The New Zealanders came close but then moved out of sight and earshot. The patients were then allowed to rest. After a few minutes there was a sudden burst of gunfire and a number of men in the line of fire were killed. Several men recognised the sound as coming from a Bren Gun and shouted to the patrol. The next time the gun fired three of the guards were killed. The other two fled pursued by Maoris. Judging by the cries that followed it seemed that the Maoris caught up with them. On return to the hospital the men found the tents so badly burned that they moved into caves near the beach where they would be collected by a hospital ship.

On the third night Sergeant Bowden was told to lead a small party back to Suda Bay. He arrived at about 2 am to find the town and the hospital ship on fire. He reported to the officer in charge who advised him to make his way back to his own unit, which was some four miles further on. He was given the password and was told to expect to be challenged by two sentries. He managed to pass them successfully and pressed on to where his gun-site had been when he left to go to the tented hospital. He trod carefully along the grass verge, and rounding a corner was surprised to be chalenged by a third sentry. His surprise was matched by that of the sentry, a sailor, on seeing a 'Bootneck' wearing

only his cap, pyjamas and boots. Eight sailors had swum ashore when their ship went down and had rigged up a tent.

They invited Bowden to spend the rest of the night with them. In the morning they had just asked him if he would like some bacon which one of the men was cooking over an open fire, when they heard an aircraft approaching. Quickly two others produced a sheet of corrugated iron which they held over the fire to hide it, while the cook crouched underneath and continued with preparing what was to be the first meal that Bowden had had for many days. He left them and reached the gun-site where he was nearly shot by one of his own sentries. He drew some uniform and his rifle, and only three quarters of an hour later the order was given to blow up the guns. The unit was now to become an infantry platoon in a Royal Marine Battalion under the command of Major Ralph Garrett. This improvised battalion of some 700 marines with a few four-inch and six-inch guns and light anti aircraft batteries, fought a rearguard action for the best part of four days, while the main body of troops retired from the Suda Bay area to Sphakia in the south. The losses to the rearguard were severe (431) and when survivors reached the coast their chances of being taken off by the Royal Navy were remote.

The MNBDO 1 had consisted of 92 Officers, 112 SNCOs and 1,747 other ranks in Crete on 20th May 1941, a total of 1,951. By 31st May, the last full day of the evacuation, they had suffered 1,114 casualties.

On arrival at the coast Major Garrett dismissed the survivors of the Battalion, telling them they could either wait for the Germans to arrive to take them prisoner, or take to the hills to join the Cretan Resistance, or try to make their own way off the island. He chose the latter option and called for volunteers to join him. They swam out to a derelict Motor Landing Craft and found some rations on board along with some diesel oil, petrol and water containers. The party of volunteers now consisted of 5 officers, and 134 other ranks, including 56 Marines, Australians, New Zealanders, a Greek and 2 Palestinians. Four Australian Corporals and an Army Commando Sergeant got the starboard engine working, but the propellor of the port engine was fouled by a cable. At 0855 on 1st June they cast off. They soon heard German planes approaching, but by some miracle a mist sprang up and hid them. When the aircarft had gone the mist disappeared as quickly as it had appeared. Some three hours after setting out they put into a cave on Gavdoupla, an islet 20 miles south of Crete, where they freed the propellor and filled every available container with fresh water.

The landing craft was designed for short trips at slow speeds, ferrying troops ashore. It was built to hold a maximum of 100 men, who would have been closely packed together. It was flat bottomed with no keel.

That night they set off for Africa, guided only by a small scale map of the Eastern Mediterranean which someone had taken from the wall of a school on Sphakia, and a map of North Africa which one of the Australians had. After another 80 miles the petrol ran out. One of the Australians tried to convert the engine to run on diesel fuel, but that was unsuccessful. They improvised a sail from a winch cover while the Marines, under the guidance of Marine Yeo made sails from blankets, 4 blankets were made into a jib and 6 into a mainsail. Under sail the craft was almost impossible to steer. Relays of six men had to swim alongside and push the craft to keep it heading in the right direction. Colour Sergeant H C Colwill RM organised and led the swimming parties. Colour Sergeant C A Dean RM was in charge of supplies and issued the rations - one third of a pint of water, half a ship's biscuit and a 1½ inch cube of bully beef per man per day. On the fifth day the

water had nearly run out. Two Marines improvised a distilling plant consisting of petrol tins connected by a rubber tube, and using the diesel fuel which had failed in the engines, produced 4½ gallons of drinking water in two days.. On the eighth day two men died and were buried at sea.

On the 9th June, at 1.30 am they reached land - desert - about 17 miles west of Sidi Barrani. Two Maoris found water and Sergeant Bowden set off in the darkness with an Australian Lieutenant to reconnoitre. Some five miles away they found a pipe-line leading to a British anti-aircraft unit. They arranged for lorries to pick up the survivors, and then made their way back to Major Garrett and the others. Having gathered everyone they set off again to walk to the rendezvous. They were taken to a Royal Army Service Corps camp where they were fed and rested. In the early hours of the next day there was a German air raid and one of the Marines was killed. It was his 21st birthday.

The remaining survivors were taken to Cairo.

Sergeant Bowden continued to serve in the Middle East until 1943. He returned to the UK and in 1945 signed on as a 'Continuous Service' Marine. He served in the Corps for a total of 32 years and 3 months, and was a SNCO for 32 years. He became Drum Major of the Royal Marines School of Music Band in the late 1940s and subsequently became the senior Drum Major in the Corps until he retired in 1975, when he became the Beadle to the Worshipful Company of Saddlers.

Editor's Note: Although Major Garrett's exploits in escaping from Crete are the most well known, there was another landing craft escape at the same time which is less well documented. In *"The Royal Marines - The Admiralty Account of their Achievement 1939-43'* there is the following paragraph:

> *"Once again, however, the Royal Marines initiative and powers of improvisation rose to an emergency. One officer discovered a boat, and taking a mixed party of 60 survivors with him set out for the North African coast. Food ran out on the sixth day, the last rations issued being a lump of margarine dipped in cocoa. On the eighth day, during Divine Service, the party made a landfall and finally got ashore in the Sidi Barrani area."*

For Further Reading on Crete

The Royal Marines. The Admiralty Account of their Achievement 1939-43	HMSO 1944
The Mediterranean Fleet. Greece to Tripoli. The Admiralty Account of Naval Operations April 1941 - January 1943	HMSO 1944
Airborne Invasion *by John Hetherington*	Schindler, Cairo 1944
Climax in Crete *by Theodore Stephanides*	Faber & Faber 1946
The Marines Were There *by Bruce Lockhart*	Putnam 1950
Battle of Crete *by J D Mourellos*	Erotocritous, Heraklion 1950
Greece and Crete *by Christopher Buckley*	HMSO 1952
Battle For Crete *by John Hall Spencer*	Heinemann 1962
The Fall of Crete *by Alan Clark*	Anthony Blond Ltd 1962
The Royal Marines 1919-1980 *by James Ladd*	Janes 1980
The Struggle For Crete *by I McD G Stewart*	Oxford University Press 1966 & 1991 (paperback)
Never So Proud *by John Wingate* (part fiction)	Heinemann 1966

There are numerous other books, War Diaries, and many German books which cover the story of Crete.

Egyptian Campaign of 1882 – Part 1

The Journal of Lieutenant W H Palmer RMLI

PREFACE

The reader of the following journal must bear with the writer in all mistakes, as it is the intention of the latter merely to give a simple account of the late Egyptian campaign as he himself saw it. The ensuing pages will treat mostly the doings of the Royal Marines Battalion – in which Battalion the writer served in the capacity of a Lieutenant throughout the campaign.

I shall say nothing of the events that led to the late war – as in all probability my readers are better acquainted with them than I am myself, but shall content myself by informing the reader that he may imagine war already declared.

Almost immediately on the outbreak of hostilities, a Battalion numbering 500 rank and file Royal Marines Light Infantry and 200 rank and file Royal Marine Artillery had been ordered to embark for foreign service and I had been ordered to proceed with them. Great therefore was my disappointment when the Medical Officer refused to pass me for the Battalion on account of an injury done to my knee whilst serving in Ireland.

It was needless to relate my feelings when I saw the Battalion depart in HMS *Orontes* early in June and my readers can imagine how I felt. My sorrow was not very long lived however, as on 21 July a 2nd Battalion, numbering 400 RMLI and 100 RMA received orders to prepare for Active Service and this time, having successfully passed the medical examination, I found myself actually under orders to proceed with the Battalion. (Up to this date the only events in the war had been the bombardment of Alexandria by the Fleet and the occupation of Alexandria by the Blue Jackets and Marines, the 46th Regiment and 60th Rifles. The rebels had taken up a strong position at Ramleh about 4 miles outside the City and the little garrison of our soldiers and sailors were anxiously awaiting reinforcements.

We were not to sail until the 27th July, so I spent the intervening days in bidding farewell to my relations and friends, and purchasing the many articles necessary for an officer's kit on Active Service.

Our Battalion was composed as follows:

150 men from Portsmouth
150 men from Chatham
100 men from Plymouth

making a total of 400 Rank and File – together with 100 Rank and File from the RMA at Eastney. The names of the officers were as follows:

Lieutenant Colonel Jones – Commanding Battalion
Lieutenant Colonel Graham – 2nd in Command *(Left service in 1887)*
Major Scott
Captain Coffin – F Company
Lieutenant Money
Lieutenant Cotterill
Captain Eden – G Company *(afterwards Transport Officer RMLI)*
Lieutenant McCausland
Lieutenant Kennedy
Captain Wardell – H Company
Lieutenant Parkinson
Lieutenant Luke
Captain McCheane – K Company
Lieutenant Colvin
Lieutenant Palmer

The Plymouth men arrived at our Barracks at Forton on the evening of the 26th as the transport did not intend to call at any station before Gibraltar. We had a very jovial

dinner in the evening, the effects of which were only too plainly shown when we paraded at 10.00 am on the morning of the 27th July. Though I say it who shouldn't, a remarkably fine lot the 250 were, who were present that morning and uncommonly well they looked in their white helmets, Having been inspected by the DAG, General Adair, who delivered a very good address, the order was given to march off and precisely at 10.30 we started to the well known strains of 'Auld Lang Syne' and 'The Girl I Left Behind Me'. How is it these old familiar airs always bring a strange sorrowful feeling? I cannot tell, but such is certainly the case, probably because these airs are always associated with partings.

Great crowds accompanied us cheering as we marched from the Barracks to the Clarence Victualling Yard where we embarked on board the Gun Boat *Medina* to cross over to the Portsmouth Dockyard. As we came alongside the transport we were greeted with loud cheers from the Chatham contingent and the RMA who were already on board. Besides the RMA and ourselves there were on board some of the Army Hospital and Transport Corps and several Army doctors, amongst the latter I was glad to meet an old messmate of mine - a very jovial Irishman named O'Donnell.

Our transport the *Dacca*, one of the British India Line, was commanded by Captain Burkitt whose kindness as well as that of his officers we shall never forget. Besides the troops there were about a dozen passengers on board bound for Calcutta - so we had about 35 officers, 12 passengers and nearly 800 men bound for the East.

Most of the fellows had friends and relatives on board, who intended to see the last of them and the gay dresses and uniforms formed a pretty spectacle. I, like the rest, had friends on board, who came to see the last of me. We all lunched together in the saloon and a messy luncheon it was, little would an idle spectator have thought that soon their laughing, happy faces would be so sad and sorrowful. Almost immediately after lunch the bell, which told of our departure and which also was the signal for visitors to leave the ship, rang - and then all was bustle and confusion. For the next few minutes there was an incessant shaking of hands and bidding of farewells, and in many a brave fellow's eye a tear was seen to glisten as he bade a mute goodbye to his wife or the girl he left behind him. In one corner might be seen a mother clasping her son to her breast, as with a broken voice, she bade him goodbye and God bless you, whilst in another part of the ship a laughing crowd of brother officers were saying goodbye in their own seemingly unfeeling way, though really feeling the departure greatly. You heard such farewells as "Goodbye old chap - give my love to them all" - "Don't forget to bring back a VC" - "I say old fellow, I'll thank you for a step". And to many alas, this was their last farewell. I remember how well poor Colvin and his wife bore up though only married six short months - poor girl, little did I expect did she think that when she next saw him he would be lying on his death bed.

Punctually at 3.00 pm the bridge, the last link between us and the ship commenced to churn water. Then it was that you saw hope mingled with despair written on the faces of those we were leaving behind us. Then many an eye, usually so bright, was dimmed and faces generally so radiant with smiles were trying in vain to smile through their tears.

Cheers loud and long rang out from all the ships in the harbour and from those who lined the beaches as we slowly steered out - our gallant men responding heartily. The last we saw of the Dockyard was a mass of people waving pocket handkerchiefs as with longing eyes they watched us gradually disappearing. Long after faces were indistinguishable we all remained gazing over the side at what might be our last glimpse of Old England, and the stoutest and most hardened felt, I'll warrant, a rising in his throat as the land gradually disappeared leaving all we loved and cared for behind.

Man is not naturally of a despondent nature and soon the talk and laughter was as light as ever and we were eagerly looking forward to doing good work for our country's sake. By the aid of music, deck quoits, the time flew by and at 5.30 pm on 31st July we arrived at Gibraltar.

As we remained there until the following morning, as many as were off duty went on shore and had a look at the famed rock. With two of my brother officers I visited the Alameda Gardens, where the band of a Highland Regiment was discovering sweet music. The



War preparations at Portsmouth - the Royal Marine Light Infantry leave Forton Barracks. *(From* The Graphic *dated 8 July 1882)*

scene was an extremely pretty one, the gardens were lit up by many lanterns hung in the trees and the effect of the light on the dark-eyed Spanish beauties in their many coloured costumes was as the aesthetes would say 'Quite too too!'

Early the next day we proceeded on our way and without anything worthy of note occurring arrived at Malta on the evening of the 4th August and here again we had a run ashore much to out pleasure, as life at sea becomes monotonous. Sailing again the next day, we found on the morning of the 8th our longed for haven of Alexandria was in sight and at 10.30 am we were alongside the quay, where we were greeted by several of our brother officers of the 1st Battalion, who were occupying the City. From them we learnt that there had been a sharp skirmish on the 5th in which we, the RM, had lost 27 killed and wounded and Sir Archibald Alison, in his despatch, spoke in the highest terms of the conduct of our men in this action. The Queen telegraphed out from England to know how our sick and wounded were and congratulated our men on their behaviour. I drove round Alexandria with two brother officers and saw the ruins of what must have been a magnificent city. We also visited the Outposts and had a glimpse of the enemy in the distance. Our men were tolerably comfortably quartered in an old storehouse, part of which had been restored as a Hospital. We visited the wounded in Hospital - poor fellows, though many had received their death wounds they were all cheerful and seemed glad to see us.

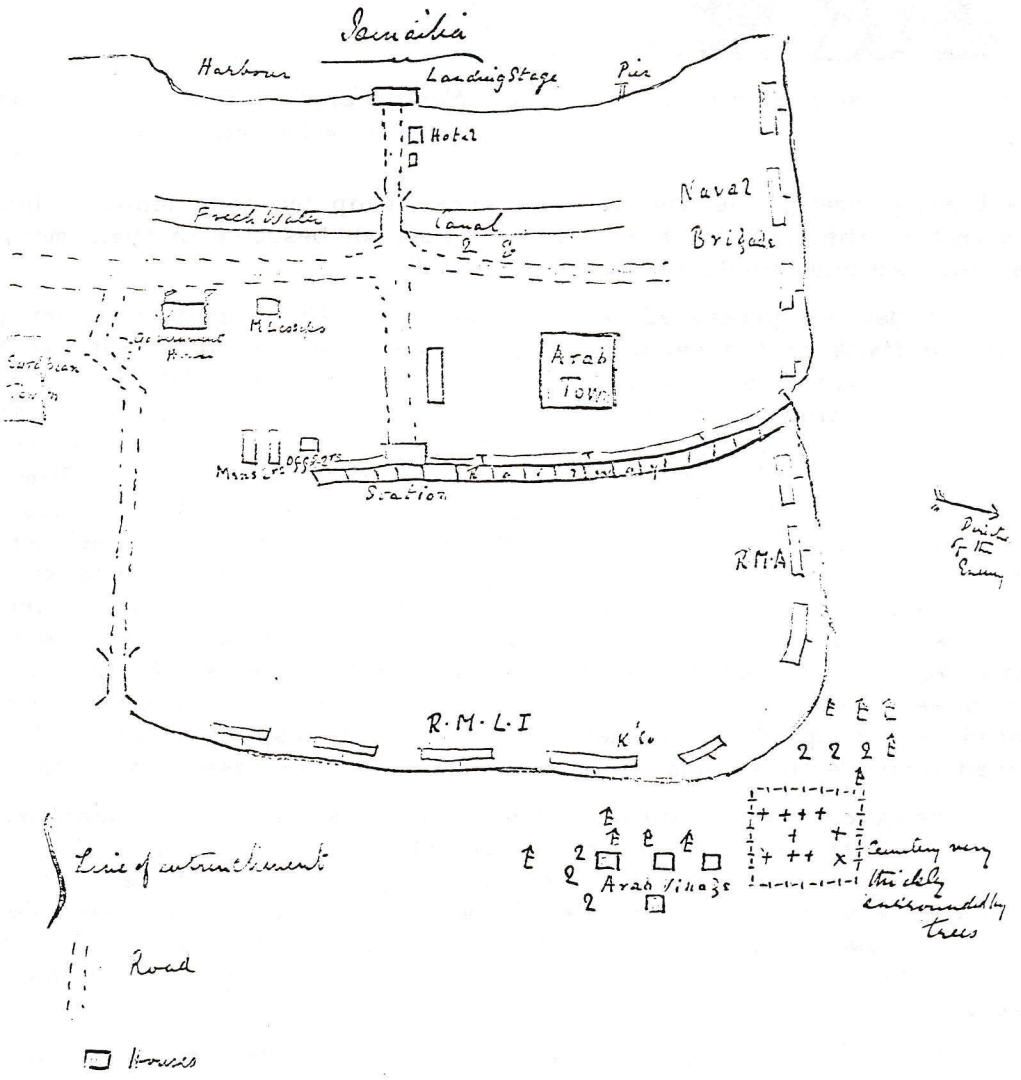
We were to receive a great disappointment here as, instead of landing, we were ordered to proceed to Port Said. Accordingly we sailed again at 5.00 pm in the evening and arrived at Port Said at 9.00 am on the 9th August. We anchored close to HMS *Northumberland* which was lying about 3 miles from the town, and in the afternoon we were transferred to her to await orders. The work of transferring was rather difficult as the sea was very choppy but in about 3 hours our task was accomplished and the last of us had left the old *Dacca*.

Sorry we all were to leave a ship where we had been so comfortable and where we had experienced such kindness from the Captain downwards. I am glad to say that before leaving we presented Captain Burkitt with a slight testimonial of our esteem in the shape of a silver dessert service. We remained on board the *Northumberland* until the 17th waiting

anxiously for news, and fearing that we were to be left out in the cold once more. The fellows on board did what they could to make us more comfortable, but the ship was so crowded that it was difficult to find a sleeping place; the heat was also very great. During our stay in *Northumberland* we dyed our helmets and white belts brown by the aid of tobacco, coffee - the idea being to make them as much the colour of the sand as possible.

Daily, several scares occurred which at the time caused considerable excitement, but invariably nothing came of them. On the 18th August however 200 men went on board HMS *Monarch* lying close in to Port Said and on the 19th the other two companies RMLI and the company RMA went on board HMS *Penelope* also lying close in - I went with the latter detachment. We were not allowed to remain long in the *Penelope* as on th morning of the 20th August we left her at 3.00 pm and embarked on board the gun boats *Dee* and *Ready*.

At the same time the two companies in the *Monarch* under Major Scott took possession of Port Said, At 7.00 am we proceeded to force the passage of the canalin the following order. First went the *Dee* with the RMA on board and then the *Ready* with the RMLI and the *Don* bringing up the rear. The men stood to their arms the whole way to Ismailia a distance of 40 miles as we minutely expected an attack; and a capital chance the enemy had of peppering us from the high banks. We were prepared to give them a hot reception as Gatling guns and Nordenfelts had been mounted in the rigging. Nothing happened however and at 3.00 pm in the afternoon we anchored by HMS *Orion* close to Ismailia. We found Ismailia in possession of about 400 Bluejackets and having disembarked we took up quarters at the Railway Station at about 5.00 pm.



A sketch map of defences at Ismailia by Lieut Palmer

We had just time to take a meal of some biscuits and water when the fall in sounded and everyone fell in, the total force numbering some 800 men. We were all drawn up together and received orders to hold a trench some 2½ miles long to resist an attack of 5,000 of the enemy which was hourly expected. We none of us, I think, thought the order a wise one; but for us, of course, to hear was to obey, so we marched off and took up our repective positions.

The men were extended as much as possible - the 100 men of my company occupying nearly ¾ of a mile, and on my left, for the space of 400 yards, there was not a single man. Had we been attacked I should in all probability never have written this - luckily the enemy heard that Ismailia was occupied by 5,000 troops (whereas there were but a wretched 800) and so never attacked.

Our manning of these trenches was certainly one of the greatest prices of rashness during the campaign, for had we been attacked few of us would have lived to tell the tale and there was no advantage gained by holding this particular trench, as an inner trench, much smaller, could have been held much easier and with the same results. How slowly that night passed - from 7.00 pm at night until 7.00 am the next morning we remained awake anxiously on the look out. There was nothing but monotony except an occasional shell from the *Orion* which was sent into the Egyptian camp about 2 miles distant. For my part I felt as though I would far rather that the enemy come than that they should keep us in suspense. Every sound was carefully listened to and the outpost carefully established, but the only sounds were the incessant barking of the dogs from the native village close by and the cries of the shells as they sped on their fiery course.

What a relief it was to us weary night watchers when the sun rose and we were permitted to return to our quarters, such as they were, and a breakfast of hard biscuits washed down with water. After breakfast we foraged about and finding the Chief de Gare's house empty we took up quarters there and prepared to make ourselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit.

We were not in the house two hours before we again received orders to shift - accordingly we paraded and marched to join the 1st Battalion (which had arrived from Alexandria) and the two companies from Port Said.

From this date the 1st and 2nd Battalions were always together in one Battalion under Lieutenant Colonel Jones. On this, the 22nd August, the whole Battalion encamped out under the trees by the fresh water canal at Ismailia, and from this time our hardships really commenced, potted meat (familiarly known as 'Fanny Adams') and biscuits formed our meals now and all articles of kit except what we stood up in were put in store.

At night our helmets or water bottes served as pillows and very comfortable they seemed, so tired were we usually when night came. The days were frightfully hot and we lay down usually wet through with perspiration, to wake up wet with dew. A great many men began to fall sick from the combined effects of bad food, heat, etc., and every few minutes a stretcher went by bearing some poor felows to the hospital. Troops now began to arrive in great numbers and all day long the wharf presented a most animated and busy appearance. Horses, mules, stores, ammunition and men all had to be landed on this little jetty.

Our Battalion remained at Ismailia until the 24th August, our time being employed in constructing a railway and landing the many implements of war. Every branch of the Service was to be seen mingled together, all, in fighting dress and some in such nondescript uniforms that it was an absolute impossibility to tell to what branch of the Service they belonged. Generals and their staff galloped about in every direction; and all day long guns and ammunition and commissariat wagons thundered through the streets causing no small astonishment to the inhabitants of this usually quiet little town.

On the 22nd orders were received for us to be brigaded with the Guards in the 1st Brigade, 1st Division, under the Duke of Connaught; this order however, was luckily for us afterwards cancelled, though at the time we were much pleased at the evident compliment.

By Thursday 24th August between twelve and fifteen thousand troops has been landed and the advance into the desert commenced at 2.00 pm on that day with the departure of the Guards and 60th Rifles followed at 4.00 pm by our Battalion. Before marching every officer and man was supplied with a day's ration of biscuit and a bottle full of water; and each man carried 120 rounds of ammunition.

We marched from 4.00 pm that afternoon until 12.00 at night merely halting for about half an hour two or three times. It was very heavy work as the sand in some places was up to our knees and at all times we were ankle deep. Very glad we were when we halted and lay down for the night at a place caled Ramses. Though only four hours sleep was allowed and that we spent in a marsh of mud and water. Just before we halted I was with the advance group and Colonel Jones was riding by me, when suddenly his horse fell into a deep ditch and rolled right over him. I thought he was done for. I rushed down and caught hold of his horse and pulled the Colonel out and to my relief I found he was only shaken and had lost his spurs.

At 4.00 am the next morning we were again on the alert and preceded by some Dragoons, Artillery and the Guards advanced to meet the enemy, who were close in front of us. We came into contact with them at El Mahouta; but the Artillery and Cavalry soon drove them out of their position, so that we in the Infantry Brigade had but little share in the skirmish.

The Artillery and Cavalry went in pursuit of the enemy and the Infantry after marching until 10.00 am halted in the middle of the desert in the burning heat with no shade whatever. At Tel El Mahuta we found the railway and the canal strongly dammed. The engineers were at once set to work to clear the railway, but it was a tedious task and the dam delayed the running of the trains further than El Mahouta for some time.

(To be continued)

Early Use of "AMPHIBIOUS"

Colonel A J S Crockett OBE RM has written about a discovery he made when researching in Devon. He wonders whether anyone can throw more light on it. He found the following:

> Marine Barracks, Stonehouse - Freemasons' Lodge "inrolled" in September 1799 and entitled "AMPHIBIOUS LODGE".

This must surely be one of the earliest uses of the word in the Corps.

* * * * * * *

In Trewman's Exeter Flying Post (the weekly paper for a large area of Devon) of December 6th, 1810, there was the following notice:-

> *Plymouth, December 4, Friday.* Yesterday the battalion of Royal Marines, destined for foreign service, embarked on board the *Abercrombie* of 74 guns and *La Rhin* of 44. They are destined to join Lord Wellington's army in Portugal. We have scarcely ever seen a finer or healthier body of men; stout young fellows, full of spirit and activity, and fit for any service they may go upon.

They suffered a rather different fate from those Royal Marines who sailed, 130 odd years later, in a ship of a similar name *Le Rhin*, subsequently renamed *FIDELITY*.

REMINISCENCES OF A WARTIME OFFICER — Part VIII

by Major Patrick D A Ennor (RMHS)

In April 1942, our Brigadier (Brigadier Robin Campbell) assumed command of the Royal Marines Division in place of Major General Robert Sturges who had left to command the expedition in Madagascar. Major General Campbell did me the great honour and kindness of taking me as his AdC. I accordingly gladly joined his HQ at Stirling. Since Colonel Nick Williams departure I had been a good deal less happy in 2nd Battalion. I had the unenviable task of commanding HQ Company (to relinquish a rifle company might have been a different matter) and I had a very great regard and affection for General Robin. When, on my arrival I sought to express my appreciation, his characteristic reply was "Oh well, Pat, that's all right. I thought it would be better to have you rather than some little boy who would feel he had to talk to me all the time."

General Sturges had taken with him on the Madagascar Campaign the entire Divisional Staff with the exception of one officer who drank too much, and the Chaplain who talked too much. C F Philips came as GSO 1 from the 1st Division where he had been GSO 2 and I fancy was a good deal shaken at finding there was no staff, and the Division consisted of but 4 Battalions of Infantry and the Divisional Signals but no other supporting arms. C F Phillips was a most efficient officer but in those days he was most relentless and exacting - he mellowed considerably in later years - and largely owing to the deficiencies of staff, a good many of the G1's demands fell on me. It was not an easy task to perform all the variegated functions that devolved upon me, in addition to my proper duties as AdC and also to establish the General's Mess. This was in part of a nice old house belonging to Miss Dundas on the outskirts of Stirling. We had the ground floor and basement and Miss Dundas continued to occupy the rest of the house. This rather peculiar arrangement however worked well enough and I don't think we gave Miss Dundas much trouble. Our bedrooms were, of course, furnished in rather a peculiar way as they were normally the sitting rooms of the house and still retained their Victorian sitting room furniture with an addition of a wardrobe and bed.

My master lost no time in setting about getting a staff together, Major C K Hamilton, who had been his Brigade Major came as AA & QMG. The Army produced Major Tilly, Royal Fusiliers, and several Grade 3 staff officers, and I had a hand in getting Nicol Gray to come - rather reluctantly I suspect - from 3rd Battalion to be GSO 2.

Quite early on the G1 & AQ (who did not always see eye to eye) agreed that it would be proper for the GOC to inspect the Divisional HQ's offices, quarters, messes, men - everything. We reached the stage in this pilgrimage of inspecting B Mess where the cooks, waiters, servants were all drawn up outside under the command of their Mess Corporal. An astonishing assembly met the eye, rivalled in magnitude only by diversity of appearance. In addition to Marines, there were Gunners, Highlanders, men from English Infantry Regiments, even, I believe, a Naval steward, and their numbers were palpably far in excess of the authorised establishment. As one of the periodic manpower drives was then at its zenith, this assembly was really rather shattering. In order to try to establish in his mind what all these men were doing the General would speak to them. One man so questioned gaily replied "I clean the bath" (not even baths in the plural). I suspect there was a heavy exodus from Stirling during the next few days.

For some time the Royal Marines Division had been a component of Force 110, later to become 1st Army, the command of which was held by General Alexander, who rather curiously

doubled this role with that of GOC-in-C Southern Command. General Alexander was, I think, well disposed towards us, but his successor General Schreiber was not, and reasons such as differences in establishments, scales of weapons and transport were advanced to cause us to be removed from Force 110. This was a great disappointment as it would have been a splendid thing to be in First Army. We also lost our good friends 8 Bn Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders and the 1 Bn Royal Marines came back to us. It was decided to commemorate our association with 8 A & SH by the presentation of a piece of silver. I was commissioned to organise this and having collected the money, to make an appropriate purchase. I have never been very fond of purely ornamental silver preferring very much something that can be used, and as such things as statuettes were not available during wartime, I did not have much difficulty in following my own inclination in the matter. It was great fun going down to the smart London silversmiths and ask the assistants to "show me something a little better". In the event I bought a very nice plain silver salver on which, in accordance with tradition, our badge and that of the A & SH were engraved with a suitable inscription. There was no opportunity to present this formally, nor I think would have anyone wished this to be done; but the Commanding Officer of the 8th Argylls, Colonel George McKellar came to lunch in A Mess one day and the General handed it over to him. In the letter which Col McKellar subsequently sent he wrote that "we shall be proud to have on our Mess silver the emblem of the Royal Marines and are confident that you will add fresh laurels to those which you have encircled the Globe."

Being now 'Nobody's Darlings' we were placed under the direct operational control of the Chief of Combined Operations, Admiral Mountbatten. We soon received instructions to expect a visit from an American lady journalist, Miss Virginia Cowles. Miss Cowles' visit was personally sponsored by Admiral Mountbatten and she was to be 'afforded every facility and shown everything she wished to see.'

Miss Cowles duly arrived in Stirling and came to dine in the General's Mess on the day of her arrival. My master had recently come into the family property of Inverardoch, Doune, and Mrs Campbell was living in one of the cottages. We prevailed upon Mrs Campbell to come to dinner too to support Miss Cowles, but she insisted her activities should be confined to sitting at the end of the table and 'catching the eye' of the lady visitor at the other end. Dinner seemed to be progressing failry smoothly and I do not think there was an unduly protracted pause between courses, but Miss Cowles, in American fashion, decided to smoke and began to explore her bag for a cigarette. C F Phillips, who was sitting next to her and saw what she was at, exclaimed "Oh don't do that, you must have one of our cigarettes", and turning to the nearest khaki clad figure behind him, who as it happened was his own servant, bade him bring the cigarettes. I had spent considerable time that morning rehearsaing the staff - who were in many cases quite inexperienced in such work - in the conduct of a dinner party and it was plain to see the mental struggle going on. "This is quite different from what the AdC told us this morning. He said that cigarettes come at the end. Now my own officer tells me to bring them half way through." In the end he compromised. He brought the cigarette box, with matches and ashtray on a salver, proffered it to Miss Cowles saying in his North country accent, as he did so "Ah must warn you Miss, there's more to eat yet." This of course produced immediate success and relaxation and from then on our evening progressed admirably.

The following morning I collected Miss Cowles early and we spent a long day visiting the different units. We even crossed to visit Peter Picton's beach group on the Isle of Arran; here in addition to the equipment which he was meant to have, he had also acquired a small ship by some means known only to himself. This, wearing the White Ensign, he used

to take into the Clyde estuary and was furiously indignant if the *Queen Mary* and other Leviathans failed to dip to him! *(Note: It is customary for merchant vessels and yachts to dip their ensigns to a British warship whether the latter be met at sea or passed in harbour. Not only as an act of courtesy, it can also indicate that all is well on board the yacht or merchantman).*

On our return journey neither the charms of the back streets through which we were driving, nor my scintillating conversation sufficed to keep Miss Cowles awake after her long day in the strong air. The lady was sleeping peacefully when we were stopped in Paisley by the Military Police. Of course Miss Cowles was equipped with a positive library of permits and authorities, and we proceeded on our way. I have never thought the members of the Corps of Military Police to be conspicuous for their intelligence, but it would hardly seem likely, if we were going to misuse service transport, that one would (a) employ a General Officer's conspicuous car with service driver, nor (b) drive through the middle of a busy town in broad daylight accompanied by a civilian female.

One particular asset at Divisional HQ was the presence of two chargers, upon which General Sturges had insisted. I used to indulge in early morning rides and brought up some of my own bridles and saddles. Amongst the horses I found my old friend Pride from Deal;. I don't know what had happened to him in the intervening 2½ years but he was very pottering, and indeed had almost broken down. He was no longer the gay and fresh mover who had given me such fun with the West Street Hounds in 1939 and 1940.

We did not remain at Stirling long but were moved to the pleasant South Wales town of Tenby with its red fishing village and above it the more modern watering place which contained some good terraces of Georgian and early Victorian architecture. In Tenby too, we had the strange experience of being billeted in part of a house. This time a private hotel, where the proprietress endeavoured simultaneously to carry on her own business, which had, of course been badly affected by the war.

In the General's Mess were the G1, the AQ and the Chaplain and later the CRA, Colonel 'Gunner' Paine and Colonel Kinnear, the ADMS. Colonel Paine had been in the Royal Artillery, he was extremely good looking and had the most striking blue eyes I have ever known. Despite his high rank, that of full Colonel in 1942, Colonel Kinnear was not a regular RAMC officer but a Territorial. He was highly distinguished in his profession and I cannot understand how he came to join us as one would have imagined the Scottish Divisions would have been falling over themselves to get hold of him.

We had a good deal of social life; there was dancing at the hotels in the evenings, my old battalion, 2nd Royal Marines, now commanded by Colonel 'Bonzo' Simmonds, gave an excellent dance at Haverfordwest, and there were opportunities for bathing and trolling of mackerel. General Robin was the most hospitable of men and a day seldom passed but someone came for a meal or a drink.

I do not want to give the impression that our lives were one continual round of parties and amusements; on the contrary the General was most determined to develop and bring forward the Royal Marines Division and, so far as possible, to make good its deficiencies in the matter of supporting arms and artillery units. Everything was subordinated to these objectives and much of the entertaining was complementary to them. The GOC was anxious to maintain close personal contact with his Brigadiers and Commanding Officers, and conversations and informal discussions in the Mess provided excellent opportunities for this. He also wished to renew his acquaintance with the

COs of the newly formed artillery units and, as the majority of the officers in the Division were members of one Corps, there were many old friends and acquaintances to be received and welcomed.

At this time the Royal Marine Office decided to send us a distinguished shot, Sir Lionel Fletcher and it was felt in view of his age and rank it would be appropriate if he was accommodated in the GOC's Mess. Sir Lionel brought in his train another well known rifle shot, Colonel Armstrong, and I am sorry to say that these two distinguished gentlemen were nicknamed by the irreverent, Sir Lionel Safety-Catch and Colonel Peep-Sight. In addition to being an exponent on the range, Sir Lionel was a keen stalker and brought something of the atmosphere of the shooting lodge to our seaside hotel. He habitually ate his breakfast porridge standing up and on leaving the house would put on his cap and belt with the words "Well I'm off up the hill." All this was perfectly natural and unaffected. There was no question of putting on a turn to make a hit. Over the years the words and actions had become so much part of his routine they were automatic.

Sir Lionel Fletcher was very fond of society and very hospitable. He often used to have dinner parties at the local hotels. He was a good raconteur and it was at one of these parties that he told the tale of the eternal triangle - consisting in this instance of husband, wife and the husband's best friend who was a stickler for the correct use of words. Coming home unexpectedly the husband found his wife and his best friend in flagrant delight. Striking an attitude at the foot of the bed he exclaimed "Well I am surprised." The friend, assuming an air of great dignity in somewhat undignified circumstances, retorted "Pray be more accurate. We are surprised. You are astonished!"

I have heard it said that in some formations there were complaints that the men seldom saw their Commanders. Such a complaint could never have been made of my master. Almost every day we were on the road and, as the Division was dispersed over a large area, from Haverfordwest in the extreme south-west right up into the mountains of central Wales, we covered some prodigious distances. Every week I used to be supplied with a copy of each Company's training programme and the Divisional Commander was liable to plan a visit to any of them. He must, I suppose early on, have told his Brigadiers and Commanding Officers that their attendance would be dispensed with unless specifically required and indeed it would have been quite impractible for them to have accompanied the GOC on all his expeditions.

Despite his original strictures on being talked to by his AdC we did in fact discuss almost everything under the sun during our prolonged drives over the roads of Wales. I remember once passing a nice white Georgian house placed attractively in its parkland with grazing cattle and hunters, and saying to my master "That looks a good sort of house, I'm sure it's the sort of house where there's China tea and a ham on the sideboard." This amused General Robin quite considerably and the description 'A China tea and ham house' became regular usage in our conversation for many years. Returning home from one of these expeditions the General's car broke down. It was only a minor fault, a loose petrol connection or air lock, and Ash, his very capable young driver, soon had the car going again. That evening after dinner he looked at me across the tops of his spectacles and said, in his quizzical way "I am surprised, Pat, that after that excellent MT course which you attended, and about which you are so fond of telling us, you did not immediately diagnose the trouble with my car that afternoon."

During this time frequent trips were made to London - generally for conferences at HQ Combined Operations. Continual attempts, both official and unofficial, were being made to get the Division or even part of it, a battalion or even a platoon, into some sort of operation or raid. It was felt, I think quite rightly, that this would be a valauble stimulus to training and morale; but these efforts never succeeded. Always the answer was the same: 'The RM Division must be kept intact as a complete formation, there can be no question of risking even a small part of it in some minor operation.'

We had, too, our full share of visitors. General Schreiber, now GOC-in-C Western Command, came to look at one of our exercises in the mountains for which we abandoned cars and the two Generals went in one Bren Carrier and Coke, General Schreiber's AdC, and I in another. General Marshall Cornewall, who succeeded General Schreiber also visited us and Admiral Mountbatten, accompanied by the Adjutant General RM and an impressive entourage, came to look at a large scale exercise called *Berwyn*. A curious incident arose over the name of this exercise. The original code name given to it, which was I believe, that of some Mediterranean island, had no particular significance for us other than an abstruse connection with Royal Marines of long ago. It had however a very real significance for the War Office; apparently a plan for the invasion of this very place was at that time lying in the pending basket. When a copy of our scheme was sent, more or less as a formality to the War Office, the 'Intelligence' boys nearly had heart failure. They contended the use of this name for an exercise involving large numbers of Marines would at least draw the enemy's attention to it as a possible objective and might even result in an attempt to forestall us. Accordingly the name of our exercise was changed to *Berwyn*. Not even the most perspicacious of enemy agents could read much into the name of a remote mountain in central Wales.

Another Important Personage who came to look at us was Mr A V Alexander, then First Lord of the Admiralty, and I met him and his henchman, Mr Isaacs, at Carmarthen. Dressed in a blue suit and a yachting cap, the First Lord's appearance and, to an extent, his manner produced an effect that was quite Churchillian - a resemblance which I might suspect was not entirely fortuitous. After visiting various units in the forenoon the First Lord came to lunch in the General's Mess. For this event we had decided to produce one of our few bottles of excellent port. This was a great success, so much so that, as Mr Alexander seemed in no hurry to move on to the afternoon's programme, I told the mess waiter to bring another bottle. This duly appeared, I did not have any myself, and vaguely noticed that it was not disposed of with quite the same enthusiasm as its predecessor. However there was much bustle, sorting people into cars, and the setting out on the delayed afternoon's programme to be got through, so I thought no more about the port until I returned to the Mess in the evening. I was met by Mne Sign who greeted me with the words "The Chaplain wants to see you, Sir. He's after your blood. Says that at lunchtime today we took a bottle of his Vino Sacramento which you let him keep in the Mess wine cupboard!"

As it poured with rain throughout the day of the First Lord's visit it was clear that the fairly light black shoes which he was wearing were quite inadequate and it seemed that, unless we were careful, we would have the death of a Cabinet Minister on our hands. We therefore got him a pair of ammunition boots from the QM's stores of one of the units visited. Some few days after the visit, the QM concerned rang me up and said that he proposed to send me the debit voucher for the boots, as so far as he

Next Special Publication - Wales

The next Special Publication will be on Royal Marines Camps and Establishments in Wales during World War 2. Anthony J Perrett is writing this, basing it on a series of articles he wrote in *The Globe & Laurel* about 15 years ago. He needs more personal accounts if possible. So if you have any memories of Towyn, Barmouth, Tenby, Saundersfoot, Milford Haven, etc, please write to him as soon as possible, preferably before Christmas. He also needs photographs, which will returned if required, or placed in the Museum photographic library if not. His address is inside the front cover.

The full list of Special Publications published by the Society:

SP1	*'Hail and Farewell' - Royal Marines and the Portsmouth area*
SP2	*Extracts from 'Royal Marines Records' Pt 1 1755-1792*
SP3	*The Royal Marines and the Dockyards 1755-1949*
SP4	*Extracts from 'Royal Marines Records' Pt 2 1793-1836*
SP5	*Extracts from 'Royal Marines Records' Pt 3 1837-1914*
SP6	*The Ghost of a General and the RM Officers of 1914*
SP7	*One Time Marine - A Bootneck's Tale*
SP8	*41 (Independent) Commando RM- Korea 1950-52*
SP9	*Royal Marines in East Devon (Lympstone & Dalditch Camps)*
SP10	*Expedition to Siberia - 1919*
SP11	*Marines of the First Fleet (Australian Bicentennial)*
SP12	*Memoirs of Sgt Harry Wright (Zeebrugge and Aftermath)*
SP13	*Fidelity Will Haunt Me Till I Die*

Many of these publications are still available and may be obtained from Major J C Beadle MBE, MC

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was concerned, they had been drawn by me. I told him if this was done I would merely forward the debit voucher to the Private Office, but suggested that some accountancy procedure must surely be available by which the First Lord of the Admiralty could draw a pair of boots. Nothing more was heard of the matter for some weeks, when HQ of 102 RM Brigade, which was commanded by Brig A H E Reading, had an exercise. On this exercise the transport was camouflaged and the scrim nets, usually carried on the luggage grids on the car roofs, were unrolled. When the net of the Brigadier's car was unrolled, out from its folds fell the boots. Brigadier Reading's car had been used to convey the First Lord on the final lap of his tour, and no doubt the boots had been placed on the luggage rack when he changed back into his walking shoes.

(To be continued)

Editor's Note: After his visit to attend Exercise *Berwyn*, Rear Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Chief of Combined Operations signalled (23 Sep 43):

> "The great pleasure and pride which I feel at having the Royal Marines Division come into Combined Operations Command has been increased tenfold after seeing the magnificent display that your men put up after three days under terrible conditions. I am certain you have there the finest material in the British Forces and, that there will be no finer assault Division in the world."

Plymouth Divisional Band in Normandy – 1944

by Sqn Ldr E W J Bevan RAF (*(sometime Act Tempy Major RM) (RMHS)*

On an August afternoon in 1944 the members of Naval Party 1502(C) and the people of Ouistreham-Riva Bella awaited the arrival of the Band of the Royal Marines, Plymouth Division. The enemy, now in full retreat, had quit Normandy and the sailors and marines of the naval party no longer faced him across the estuary of the Orne. Awaiting orders to move eastwards to link up with the Canadian Forces about to invest Boulogne and Calais, a pleasant afternoon of musical relaxation was anticipated.

A makeshift platform of heavy timbers had been assembled for the musicians. The local residents, their major ordeals now over, had gathered in pleasurable expectancy. Patience, indeed, was the operative word, because the seconds ticked by into minutes, then on to quarter and half hours, but with no band appearing. The Senior Naval Officer chaffed the OC Royal Marines about the Royal's punctuality. At seven bells it was decided that the visitors must be told that the concert would not take place. The SNO spoke passable French and pronounced that the band had had "an accident au camion". There was concern and consternation until the OCRM gave an assurance that there had been no casualties. The potential audience was relieved and it only remained for their disappointment at the lack of music to be assuaged by an invitation to partake of afternoon tea, provided from appropriate elements of compo rations.

It had been arranged that after the proposed concert at Ouistreham the band would play at Caen. As the statement of the "accident au camion" had been purely diplomatic, it was therefore hoped that the band would still reach that ruinously battered city by the evening. The hopes of the large crowd assembled were raised by the appearance in blue service dress of an officer from a neighbouring detachment but whom they presumed to be the 'Chef de Musique'. Such hopes were dashed, however and the audience departed. It was learned the next day that at the time when it was expected that the special sound of the Plymouth band would be heard, the band, instead, was marching down the Champs Elysées. Paris had just been liberated and the band had been diverted. Common sense and reason overcame disappointment, but a few days later the band did go to Caen and gave a much appreciated concert of largely French music in one of the main squares from which the debris had been cleared. The sorely tried but delighted citizens gave a great ovation, and as the band marched away to *Le Rêve Passe* (Krier/Helmer) many could not be restrained from leaving the pavements to try to embrace the musicians. The band then proceeded to nearby Blainville to give another performance, to be followed by a reception for local dignatories.

The band's visit was of special enjoyment and importance to me because I had been a lifelong devotee of the Plymouth Royal Marines Band and had rarely missed any opportunity of attending a parade or performance, now so many years ago. My parents had known the endearing and delightful mother of the O'Donnell brothers and I myself had attended the same kindergarten as P.S.G's daughter, May. Later I had been a Plymouth Hoe neighbour of the great Ricketts, and I was anxious to meet his successor and hear a concert under the new direction. Such an opportunity, occasioned by war, should hardly be described as heaven sent, but I could have wished for little better at that point in time, as any real follower of the drum will understand.

After a short conversation with Captain R H Stoner LRAM RM, the immaculate new director, and then with Band Sergeant Dolbear, the concert began. Over forty five years later I recall only one item, apart from the music of the Sunset Ceremonial. It was a fine rendition of *Showers of Gold* (Herbert L Clarke) by the then Sergeant Banning. Conversation with Captain Stoner during the post-concert reception was interesting and informative, and I was able to be of some help to him as a rather amateur interpreter. Asked by one of the mayors which band he considered the world's greatest, his diplomatic but obviously sincere reply was that he admired no bands

more greatly than those of La Garde Républicaine and the US Marine Band at Washington - an opinion with which few connoisseurs of today would seriously quarrel.

The occasion had, however, the added interest of being the first Divisional Band concert I had attended where the direction was by a product of the Royal Naval School of Music. The circumstances of the appointment are of great interest, as it marked a turning point in the history of Royal Marine Bands. I am using the adjectival description and title which were used conversationally and were also in fairly general usage, except when the more official and pedantic form was considered preferable. Another indication of other possible changes to the system came later that year when the GOC Royal Marines instructed that preference be given to candidates from the Royal Naval School of Music when vacancies arose in the Divisional Bands.

The appointment of a new director for the Plymouth Band came about through the ill-health of Major F J Ricketts (Kenneth Alford), who had reached retirement age but had continued to serve as a retired officer, in wartime. After hospitalisation at the RN Barracks, Plymouth, he was placed on sick leave but was advised that his work had become too strenuous. His continuous service amounted to 48½ years and the GOCRM was reluctant to place him on the retired list, but decided that there was no other course to adopt. Appointments as Bandmasters, later Directors of Music, at the grand divisions of the Royal Marines were greatly sought after and widely contended.

As far back as 1884, when the bandmaster of the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, was appointed bandmaster of the RMLI, Portsmouth Division, there had been 115 applicants. Subsequent vacancies in the staff bands of the Corps could be reckoned to attract candidates around the 100 mark. Figures for the 1944 appointment were a little down (possibly through wartime circumstances) but the still formidable total of 81 was reached. All the applications were examined by the Commandant, Plymouth Division, and Major Ricketts. Ten applicants were selected for interview by a board of officers, consisting of Major General H W Simpson DSO ADC, Brigadier T H Jameson DSO OBE and Major F J Ricketts, psm, RM (Retd).

Older admirers of military bands are sometimes attempted to cogitate on the merits of present day bands vis-a-vis those of the past, but too many essential elements are lacking for this to be much more than conjecture. Comparing '78' records (which had to be recorded at one playing without the benefit of modern recording engineering, deletions, re-takes and editing) with LPs or CDs is no basis for a firm opinion! Nevertheless, the former Corps staff bands, which drew almost exclusively on the Army for their Bandmasters/Directors of Music and musicians, were bywords in their day even though they lacked the sophisticated support in the field of public relations and other forms of publicity. That their standards were of the highest is not surprising when we consider the array of talent from which a short list could be extracted for appearance before the selection boards. The original 81 applicants for the appointment in question comprised:

Regular Army Bandmasters	51	Army Musicians	1
Royal Naval School of Music	10	Canadian Army Bandmasters	2
National Service and Civilians	14	New Zealand Army Bandmaster	1
Royal Air Force	2		

Of those not appointed eleven became Directors of Music in the Army or RAF, ie

Director of Music, Royal Military School of Music, Kneller Hall	2
Director of Music, Royal Artillery (Woolwich)	1
Senior Director of Music, Guards Division	1
Directors of Music, other Army Staff Bands	5
Organising Director of Music, Royal Air Force	1
Director of Music, Royal Air Force	1

The unanimous opinion of the Board was that an Army candidate was the best qualified and suitable for the appointment. Commissioned Bandmaster R H Stoner LRAM of the Royal Naval School of Music was placed second and was recommended for the appointment if, for any reason, the Army candidate was not appointed. In his submission to the

Admiralty the GOCRM reported the unanimous decision that the Army candidate was considered the best qualified and most suitable. He was *"however, strongly of the opinion that Commissioned Bandmaster Stoner was outstanding and should be appointed. The GOCRM would like to recognise, therefore, the fine work done by the Royal Naval School of Music and felt that the appointment of Mr Stoner would be greatly appreciated, not only by the Royal Naval School of Music, but by the Corps as a whole."* The submission was approved by the Admiralty and Mr Stoner commissioned as Captain RM (Director of Music).

It seems that the ultimate choice was discretionary, with political overtones, and arrived at in the light of changing opinion and outlook. Although justified by the belief that the appointment would be for the greater good of the Royal Marines Band Service, some sympathy is due to the candidate placed first but finally rejected because he wore the wrong uniform. He was not, unfortunately, to attain the higher rank which came later to some of the other Army candidates. Several of these were promoted beyond the highest rank a Director of Music at Plymouth could have expected. They also received appointments of greater professsional prestige so, for a few, the cloud had a silver lining, even leading to a pot of gold.

Whatever the conclusions, it is agreeable to reflect that the members of the Board were 'unanimously of the opinion' that an Army applicant was 'the candidate best qualified and most suitable for the appointment'. Such integrity was especially suggestive of the specialist member, Major Ricketts.

On the final retirement of his predecessor, Captain Stoner's appointment took effect on 1st June 1944 and he retired in 1950. Sadly Major Ricketts died in 1945, never receiving any award for his distinguished services to British Military Music. The only distinction which followed his name were the letters p.s.m, awarded to those who had successfully completed the advanced (diploma) course at Kneller Hall. His nineteen years with the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders were as a Warrant Officer and, in those days, although cherished, bands were very much taken for granted and there was little possibility of individual recognition, except occasionally in a band regularly called upon to perform royal duties. Later, as a Director of a Divisional band which did not find the Royal Yacht band, nor was likely to accompany a royal tour, there could be no appointment to the Royal Victorian Order. Therefore many have been surprised that he did not receive even an MBE for his services to the Corps. His admiration and affection for the Royal Marines was such that he once declined the offer of an appointment at Kneller Hall because he wished there to be no obstacles to an eventual appointment as a Director of Music RM. A letter dated 5th June 1944 from the GOCRM to Major Ricketts on his retirement, is printed in the July 1944 issue of *The Globe & Laurel*.* This appears to be the final recognition. Had the GOCRM, or the Commandant at Plymouth, made any recommendation for the inclusion of an award in the subsequent Honours List its acceptance would, surely, have been immediate.

***The letter from the GOCRM to Major F J Ricketts ran thus:**

My Dear Ricketts,

Though I have already said goodbye to you in my office, I should like to write you just a short letter to thank you again for your services to the Plymouth Division and to the Corps of Royal Marines.

It is interesting to look back on the fact that I was a member of the Committee which selected you in the first instance, for the appointent of Director of Music in the Corps, a selection to which effect was not given owing to circumstances beyond our control, Nevertheless I was able to exercise an influence on your candidature receiving full consideration at a later date. If I may say so, your selection has been very amply justified by results.

I look back to many pleasant evenings and indeed matinees musicales, also when I have had the privilege of listening to the Plymouth Division Band conducted by yourself; and I know, of course, your great ability as a composer of music; but what I want today is to thank you for your personal friendship and for the way you have always co-operated to assist the Corps in any way possible.

I say goodbye to you with real regret, softened in this particular instance because I know that you are retiring at your own request.

I wish you the very best of luck in your well-earned retirement and hope that your health will be completely restored after a period of rest.

Yours very sincerely

5th June 1944 **(Sgd)** ***T.L.Hunton***

Eastney Aftermath

Following the publication of my article on Eastney in the last issue of the *Sheet Anchor*, which also appeared as a supplement to *The Globe & Laurel*, I have received a number of letters - for which many thanks. I am glad it brought back so many memories, even if I did get one or two facts wrong.

To put those right first. I managed to sink four ships in error during World War 2. My thanks to Jim Wilson who was serving in HMS *Indomitable* and John Trendall, who served the latter part of the war in HMS *Suffolk* for pointing out that these ships came through the war. In addition I managed to dispose of HMS *Aurora* and *Berwick*. In mentioning Royal Marines lost, I should have said, *"Other Portsmouth ships lost or badly damaged during World War II included....."* I apologise to those who served subsequently in those ghost ships; *Aurora* was sold to Nationalist China in 1948, *Suffolk* and *Berwick* were scrapped in 1948 and *Indomitable* served on till 1955.

Former Drum Major W E Day MBE BEM (late of Chatham Division) wrote "It would be interesting to know just how many ex-Blue Marines who remember the amalgamation are still surviving today. I remember changing from Private, RMLI, to Marine, Royal Marines, but didn't give the disbandment of the RMA a second thought. We, the RMLI, were the elite, not them."

Major Con Mahoney writes "When King George V reviewed us in late December '39 I was there as a Marine. I don't recall seeing him and he must have felt the same about me! The crisp December air was enriched by the many outstanding MTIs present - Peters, Chivers and Collis, etc. Early in January I was commissioned to join the Fort to develop RDF (Radio Direction Finding), as I came from the BBC where I worked on Station Design in a junior capacity. Within five months (RDF was too much of a luxury) I was embarked in SS *Trentino*, a gunner with a troop of 12 pdr A/S guns mounted on three ton Albion lorries as part of the Q.F Regt from all Divisions..... Eastney is seen as the great jewel in the crown and its loss is viewed with regret and sadness."

Captain George Mann (a well known PTI and QM of 41 Independent Commando in Korea) wrote "Eastney was my service home for 34½ of my 35 years in the Corps. The picture of the amalgamation took my eye for I remember that day so well. I was a boy bugler (15) not yet passed for duty, taken in a truck with one other youngster to Eastney. I had only just proved that I could efficiently clean my RMLI badges, bugle and drum..... I disliked bed filling at Eastney when we had to be in the Drill Shed at 0530 and fill our bedcovers with straw. I never could seem to get mine full."

James Ladd says that all sorts of memories kept flooding back, not least the C-in-C's daughter who used to phone up for young James. Pity she was married to a POW!. Then there were the cigarettes carefully switched for cigars to fox the Mess Sergeant on guest nights; also the artificial leg one MOA used to carry with its polished shoe and sock along the junior officers' hutments!

Major Ian Wray MBE remembered a host of stories about Eastney, particularly the one and only operational order given by the then Colonel Hunton when told that World War 2 had been declared - 'Close the White Gate!' He adds 'There was Major Toulmin, recalled for the war; his Khaki Service Dress still had his badges of rank on his sleeve cuffs. He saw me on the way to the gym one day - dressed, of course, in cricket flannels, white shirt, muffler and blues jacket. He accosted me: "Why are you dressed like that, young man?" I replied that I was on my way to the gymnasium. He said "Oh, have they got one of those here now?" Finally there were memories of the Gun Battery. He recalls that the guns were so old that many of the interlocks didn't work and we were warned about them. 'The batch above mine can't have paid attention. On the order "Cannot extend - chain rammer with pedal not pressed" - they did. Result - chain rammer descended at high speed into the gun well. My Batch gathered that the staff didn't think this was very funny!'