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SHEET ANCHOR

Volume XIX No. 1

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THE SHEET ANCHOR

Volume XIX Number 1 *SUMMER 1994*

CONTENTS

ROYAL MARINES MAJOR LANDING CRAFT ON D-DAY
by Lieutenant Colonel G C Perkins VRD RMR 2

ROYA MARINES POSTAL HISTORY
by Bob Swarbrick 13

REMINISCENCES OF A WARTIME OFFICER - Part XIII
by Major Patrick D A Ennor RM 22

THE ROYAL NAVAL CLUB, PORTSMOUTH
Submitted by Colin Bowden BEM 30

THOUGHTS ON THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
By Rosemary Sidwell 32

Whilst every effort is made to ensure accuracy, the responsibility lies solely with the author concerned. Illustrations are by by kind permission of the Corps Photographic Library, from James Ladd's book 'Assault from the Sea' or supplied by the contributor.

The cover illustration of this and last year's *Sheet Anchors* is by Charles Stadden *(RMHS)*. It depicts a Drum Major, Royal Marine Artillery (1876) and a Sergeant Royal Marines (1986) and was presented to the Sergeants Mess, Royal Marines Eastney by Captain Derek Oakley MBE on his retirement as Supervisor.

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Although this article was submitted for inclusion in the recent Special Publication on 'The Royal Marines and D-Day - Personal Reminiscences', it was felt that it was more suited to the leading article in the *Sheet Anchor*. It is an interesting historical background to the Corps role in Major Landing Craft and their deployment on D-Day and subsequent operations on the 'Trout Line'.

Royal Marines in Major Landing Craft on D-Day

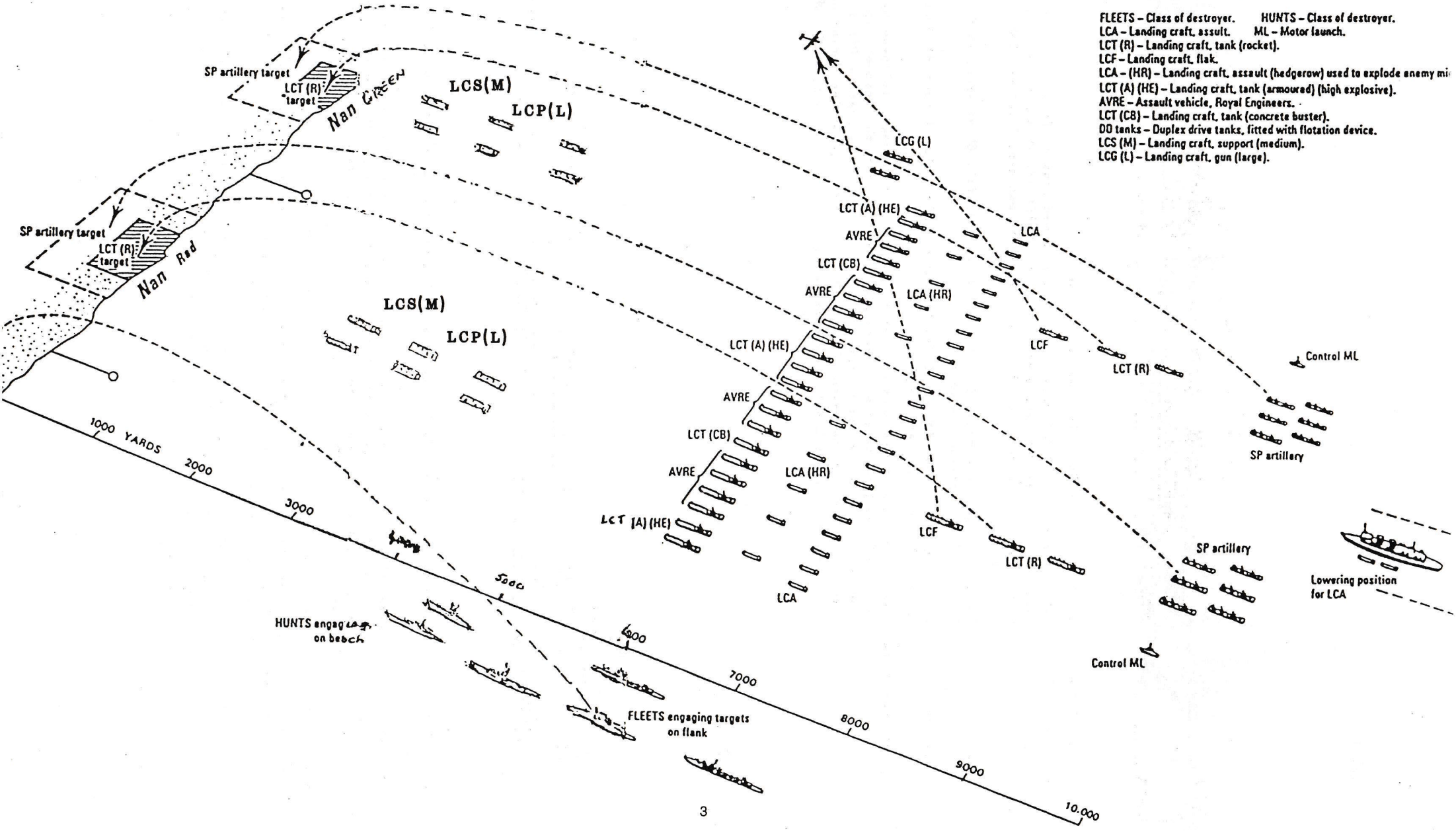
by Lt Col Graham C Perkins VRD RMR (RMHS)

The Royal Navy's commitment to Operation *Overlord* was provided through the Naval Eastern Task Force operating under the code name *'Neptune'*. The Task Force was commanded by Rear Admiral Sir Philip Vian with Brigadier (Maj-Gen Retd) A C St Clair Morford as the Senior Royal Marines Officer (SRMO). The Force consisted of three Assault Forces, each of which covered an area of beach assigned to the Gritish and Candian sector, and each of which had an SRMO; Force G (Gold beach), Lt Col C E C Ransome; Force J (Juno beach), Lt Col P W O'H Phibbs; and Force S (Sword beach), Lt Col G A Haward.

The *Neptune* Operation Order detailed two tasks for Landing Craft. Initially they were to form Suppoort Squadrons for each of the Assault Forces. Once the beaches had been secured their second task, on formation of the Support Squadron Eastern Flank, was to be the protection of those beach-heads during the hours of darkness; this became known as the 'Trout Line'. Not surprisingly, during the briefing sessions this secondary task was given scant attention by the Commanding Officers of the craft. Everyone's first priority was to ensure the success of the initial landings. Ship's companies were not briefed, and few were therefore prepared for the enormous undertaking which the 'Trout Line' proved to be.

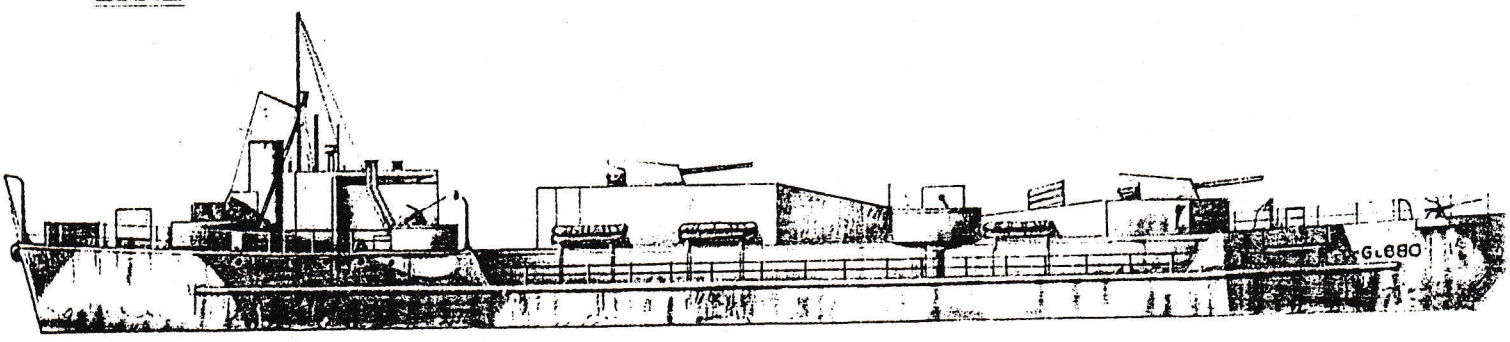
Included in the organisation of each of these Assault Forces was a Support Squadron. These consisted of Landing Craft Gun Large (LCG(L)), Landing Craft Flak (LCF) and Landing Craft Support Large (LCS(L)). The armmanent of these craft was entirely manned by Royal Marines and many of the ships' daily routine duties were also carried out by them, as the RM detachments formed the majority of the crafts' complements.

LCG(L)s and LCFs were basically a Landing Craft Tank (LCT), which had been decked in and fitted with open deck armament with provision made below deck for a large magazine space and accommodation for the ship's company and RM detachment. LCS(L)s were fitted out from the hull of a Landing Craft Infantry (Small), (LCI(S).


Time H–30 minutes: destroyers have been firing for 10 mins
LCG(L) open fire
SP artillery fire for effect
FLEETS – Class of destroyer.
HUNTS – Class of destroyer.
LCA – Landing craft, assult.
ML – Motor launch.
LCT (R) – Landing craft, tank (rocket).
LCF – Landing craft, flak.
LCA – (HR) – Landing craft, assault (hedgerow) used to explode enemy mi
LCT (A) (HE) – Landing craft, tank (armoured) (high explosive).
AVRE – Assault vehicle, Royal Engineers.
LCT (CB) – Landing craft, tank (concrete buster).
DD tanks – Duplex drive tanks, fitted with flotation device.
LCS (M) – Landing craft, support (medium).
LCG (L) – Landing craft, gun (large).
SP artillery target
LCT (R) target
Nan Green
Nan Red
LCS(M)
LCP(L)
LCG (L)
LCT (A) (HE)
AVRE
LCT (CB)
LCA
LCA (HR)
LCF
LCT (R)
Control ML
SP artillery
Lowering position for LCA
1000 YARDS
2000
3000
5000
6000
7000
8000
9000
10,000
HUNTS engaging on beach
FLEETS engaging targets on flank

Craft Details

LCG(L)



Marks 3 & 4 were conversions from LCTs of the same mark number.

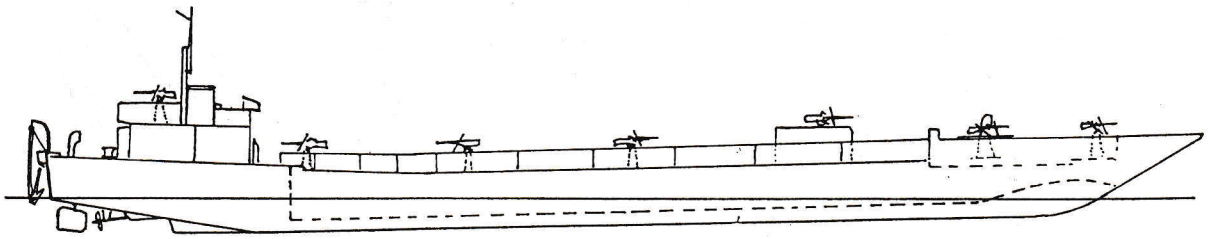
Description: Displacement, 491 & 570 tons respectively. Dimensions 190ft and 185ft in length respectively, beam 31ft and draft 39ft, approx 7ft aft (beaching not practical). Both versions were propelled by 2 shaft Davey Paxman diesel motors. BHP 92, speed 10 knots.

Armament: Two single open deck mounted QF 4.7" guns (Mk 3 craft). BL versions in Mk 4. Also 2 or 4 x 20mm Oerlikon A/A guns.

Complement: 47 including 1 Lieut RM and 25/30 RM other ranks. Plus 1 Capt RA Bombardment Liaison Officer (BLO) and 1 Cpl RA

Operational Tasks: Predicted fire at pre-arranged targets from maximum range, followed by direct fire at opportune targets as assaulting forces close the beaches. To provide indirect fire as requested through the RA Forward Observation Officer (FOO) ashore and the BLO on board. To provide beach-head protection during hours of darkness (the 'Trout Line') in company with other major landing craft, MTBs and MLs.

LCF



As with the LCG(L)s the Mks 3 & 4 were both conversions of similar LCTs. Craft description as for LCG(L)

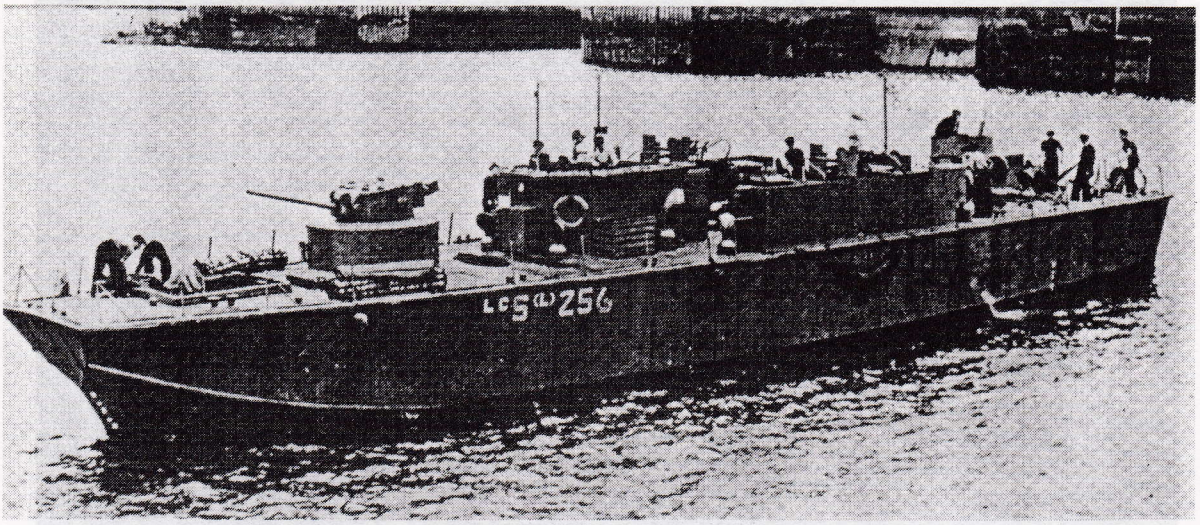
Armament: Combinations of 4 or 6 2pdr pom-poms A/A and 8 or 4 x 20mm Oerlikon (making them the heaviest armed vessels for their size of any Naval force). Certain craft had their Oerlikon firepower even further enhanced when twin 20mm guns were fitted just before D-Day. LCF 21 was one such craft.

Complement: 64/70 including two Lieuts RM and 50/54 RM other ranks.

LCF1, originally known as Beach Protection Craft (BPC), was the prototype of both LCFs and Gs and was a converted LCT Mk 2 with a three shafted Davey Paxman diesel engine. Her armament was 2 x 2 4" A/A and 4 x 20mm Oerlikon A/A; she had a complement of 74.

Operational Tasks: To provide close and immediate air cover to assaulting forces during the run in to the beaches mand close support on opportune tasks ashore. Beach-head protection during hours of darkness (the 'Trout Line') in conjunction with other major landing craft. LCF1 was also able to carry out similar tasks to LCG(L)s.

LCS(L)



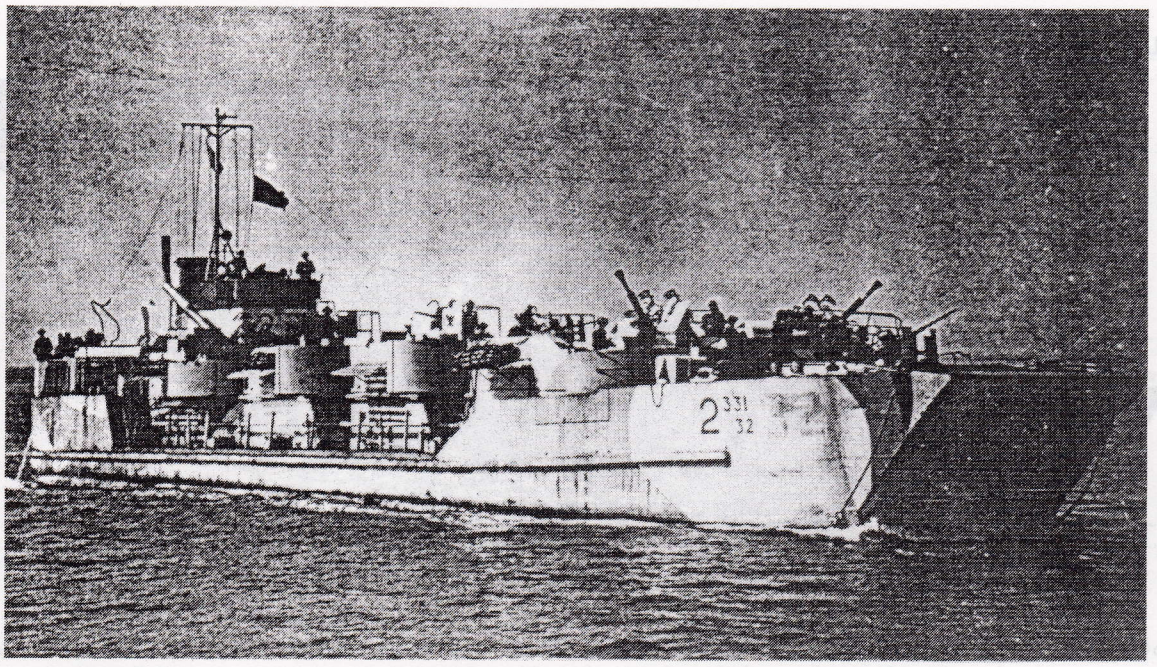
Description:	Constructed from a basic Landing Craft Infantry (Small). Displacement 112 tons. Length 104ft, beam 21ft, Draft 3ft 9in allowing beaching and withdrawal to take place. Driven by a 2 shaft Hall Scott 1,140 BHP motor giving a speed of 15 knots.
Armament:	1 x 4in smoke mortar, 1 x 6pdr. 2 x 20mm Oerlikon A/A and 2 x .5in A/A machine guns.
Complement:	25 including 10 RM other ranks.
Operational Tasks:	Beach-head protection and to accompany the first wave of assaulting forces on to the beach at H-Hour. To give covering fire against opportune targets, including enemy aircraft. To lay smoke as required and to assist the assaulting troops moving towards the beach exits. To remain in position and give similar support to follow-up troops. To provide beach-head protection during hours of darkness (the 'Trout Line') in conjunction with other major landing craft.

Royal Marines Involvement

With the various Headquarters' staff, approximately 1,600 Royal Marines Officers and Other Ranks were serving in the forty craft operating on D-Day. Full craft details and senior serving personnel, where known, are at Appendix A. It is of interest that around 3,000 of the mobilised Corps strength served in Major Landing Craft detachments during World War 2. This figure includes those craft operating in the Mediterranean Theatre who later took part in the invasion of Southern France, craft in reserve and under training for further operations in North West Europe and the Far East.

Historical Background

Minor raids carried out on enemy coastal positions during 1941 had confirmed the need for close support for assaulting troops if they were to get ashore, achieve their objective and be withdrawn on completion. This requirement was met initially in Operation *Jubilee* at Dieppe, by the deployment of six Beach Protection Craft (BPC), Nos 1-6. A description of the prototype (LCF 1) and Nos 2-6 is detailed above. BPCs 1 & 2 were manned by an all naval complement at Dieppe, where BPC 2 was sunk with few survivors. However these craft proved their worth and were involved in the



LCF(4) 32 was converted from an LCT(4) and was armed with four 2 pdr (4 x 1) and eight 20mm (8 x 1) AA guns

destruction of between 12 and 20 aircraft. The close support given to the troops during the withdrawal, and their use as rescue craft, further justified their involvement.

One of the many lessons learnt from Operation *Jubilee* was that, in adxdition to the close support given by the BPCs, close heavy gun support was required by the assaulting force just before H-Hour. At this time the offshore bombardment and RAF bombing and ground straffing had to be lifted for safety and practical reasons. A decision was made and classified 'Top Secret' that orders should be placed for 20 LCG(L) and that they would be deployed for the first time in Operation *Husky*, the invasion of Sicily, planned for mid-1943.

The LCG craft conversion and fitting out project was put in hand in locations all round the British Isles at East Ham, Lowestoft, Lymington, Deptford and Faversham in addition to the conventional shipyards on Teeside, Clydeside and Belfast. The first two craft to be commissioned, LCGs 15 & 16 were fitted out at the Harland and Wolff Belfast yard. They left there in late March 1943 to join a convoy at Falmouth en route to the Mediterranean. Disaster struck their maiden voyage when they encountered appalling weather off the Welsh coast near Milford Haven. Both foundered with a total loss of 79 lives. An immediate enquiry found that the disaster was caused as a result of the forward well decks of the craft not being completely covered over (as they had been in the LCFs). This allowed heavy seas to break in board which could not be dispersed by the existing pumping systems. The sailings of all other LCGs were halted while the well decks were completely covered over and higher capacity pumping gear installed. It has never been made public whether this disaster was occasioned by a design fault, or if it was a corner-cutting exercise to ensure the craft could be operational in time.

Involvement, Training and Administration of RM Elements

In October 1941, under Prime Minister Winston Churchill's orders, Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten was appointed Chief of Combined Operations and he was directed, amongst other matters, to oversee the design for new landing craft. Admiral Mountbatten visited RM Barracks Eastney and inspected certain of the detachments and told them in a morale boosting message that they were to become an important part of the force which was to head the return of the Allies to Europe. The detachments, however, had little or no idea what their actual role was to be or what vessels they were to serve in.

The officers of the detachment were, in the main, recently commissioned HO Officers, augmented by a sprinkling of recently promoted Lieutenants drawn from SNCOs who were approaching their pension age. A considerable number of these officers were to hold Watch Keeping certificates. The detachments themselves were made up of either one or two senior NCOs of Sergeant rank, many of them Acting, and in one instance one was a marine who had passed for Corporal and was still awaiting substantive promotion to that rank! The Royal Marine element was almost entirely made up of HOs whose service consisted of initial training followed by gunnery and seamanship training. To these were added a very small number of Continuous Service (CS) marines.

When the detachments arrived at the dockside and finally saw the craft they were to join, the HOs were numb, shattered and disappointed. "Were they not the elite of the HOs who had been selected for Sea Service?" Throughout their training they had anticipated joining the Fleet in a ship bearing a household name such as 'KG Five' or 'Illustrious'. However their feelings were mild compared with those of the CS element who felt totally betrayed that their first commissions should be in vessels the Royal Navy dubbed as 'floating kipperboxes'; furthermore they were craft which had no names but only a number for identity. One such marine, now a member of the Royal Marines Historical Society, but who wishes to remain anonymous, has stated that he found living conditions and life in general on board his BPC (LCF) the worst he was to encounter in his twenty odd years of service.

After taking part in Operation *Jubilee* the BPCs were redesignated LCFs and No 1 was recommissioned with a Royal Marines detachment. Admiral Mountbatten continued to show his personal interest, making a further visit to Eastney Barracks where he inspected detachments about to join their craft and he attended two commissioning ceremonies of LCGs 3 and 7 on the Thames. Lt Col G W Walton RM took over as Director of Training of Support Craft in late 1942. His Adjutant was Lieutenant Alf Howard a legendary pre-war international shottist. Their headquarters was an old office above Eastney Pay Office, though they were later to move to the holding base HMS *Westcliffe* at Southend. By the time D-Day arrived HMS *Robertson*, located at Sandwich, Kent and commanded by Lt Col W S North RM was in commission as the main holding base for both Major and Minor Landing Craft.

Not surprisingly Eastney Barracks was bursting at the seams with troops at this time and the additional support craft commitment necessitated the commandeering of hotels on South Parade, Southsea, to form a satellite barracks. The dining hall was a large cafe situated on the promenade opposite the hotels which has since been destroyed by fire. South Parade had certain advantages for the trainees as it took them away from the eyes of the RSM and the Provost Staff in the main barracks. But it made it a

very long march each day to the Sea Service Battery and back for Gunnery training. However this did ensure their fitness for further daily marching on the next stage of their training which was seamanship carried out in the Dockyard on board the aged monitor *Marshall Soult* and which culminated in one day at sea in a minesweeper! This was followed by a toughening up fortnight at Fort Gomer near Gosport. The training was arduous and uncomfortable; discussions still take place amongst former trainees suggesting that Dalditch Camp at its worst was preferable to Fort Gomer at its best!

Life on board the support craft was neither easy nor comfortable. Space was restricted for living accommodation because of the requirements for large magazines for the ammunition. Washing and showering facilities were minimal; there was nothing like enough hooks for the crew to sling their hammocks conventionally and billets were found in the most odd places. Early craft had oil lighting but this was later updated to electric. Probably the worst aspect was the condensation throughout the craft, which was improved during the months just prior to D-Day by spraying cork particles over the bulkheads and deckheads. To compensate for the conditions on board, pay was increased by 4 pence a day 'hard liers'. The youthful composition of the detachments was demonstrated by one LCF having only one Marine old enough to draw his tot!

All the problems of living on board the craft and the lack of amenities were minimalised when the craft put to sea for work-up and training. Numerous exercises took place along the south coast during the early months of 1944. There was so much to learn and everyone realised that time was short in which to become an efficient fighting unit. However, following the landings, in the long twelve weeks that these craft spent operating on the 'Trout Line' these discomforts added greatly to making the night protection of the beach-heads a dangerous and arduous task.

In hindsight it is obvious from all the exercises carried out on open beaches that the invasion would not take place against a heavily defended port. However, on the mess decks there was a majority held view that it would be the Pas de Calais area, which of course is just what the Chiefs of Staff wanted the enemy to think.

In early May when many of the Support Squadron craft were tied up in Beaulieu river, personnel on those craft near the wooden pier leading to the nearby establishment HMS *Mastodon* were surprised to see a working party of sailors doubling up and down the pier, causing a number of cross planks to break under their weight. These were immediately replaced by a gang of chippies following the troops. Information was later passed that the craft would be reviewed the following morning but no Reviewing Officer was named. At mid morning the next day the C-in-C Portsmouth's barge was seen slowly passing down the line of craft. No doubt the C-in-C was in the barge somewhere but he was well down the seniority list. In the centre stood King George VI and with him were General Eisenhower and Winston Churchill. A memorable moment for all those present which was ruined for the many who were horrified to see His Majesty, as he disembarked from the barge, fall through a plank on the pier which had been missed during the previous day's evolution!

The final briefing for Operation *'Neptune'*, the Navy's part of *Overlord*, took place on June 1st in the Civic Centre at Southampton. All Support Squadron craft COs and OCRMs were present. It was a glorious spring day and during the lunch break Naval and Marine officers poured out onto the lawns outside and lazed around in the sunshine.

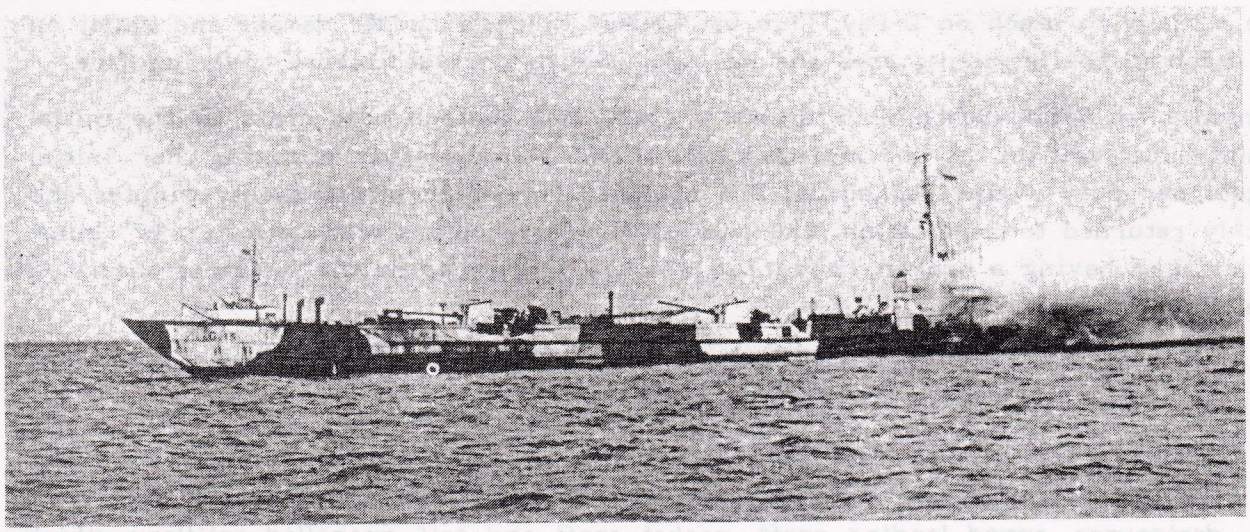
The archive photographs showing seemingly hundreds of LCTs and major landing craft tied up five and six deep along the berths occupied in pre-war days by ocean liners at Southampton Docks, are indicative of the enormous size of the armada which was shortly to move out to Spithead to assemble for the seaborne invasion. That this armada of ships could leave their berths without a hitch was a tribute to the seamanship and skills of their COs, most of whom were young RNVR officers.

The weather deteriorated and no-one expressed regret when it was announced that the invasion would not take place as planned on the morning of June 5th. The weather was not good even when the craft did eventually get under way, but it was not the worst that major landing craft had experienced during training and exercises. Sympathy went out to the smaller craft as it was known that they would have to make a very long and arduous sea passage. Seasickness was the order of the evening and through the night. Many men chose to remain on deck during the passage instead of going down below to the ghastly stench and humidity of the messdecks. In one LCG everyone except the Sergeant Major, the OCRM and the CO were sick. There was a roar from many on board when the Sergeant Major was eventually seen leaning over the side, a roar only exceeded when the OCRM followed shortly afterwards. However the CO, a mature RNR officer, did not follow suit.

With the arrival of first light the Support Squadrons found themselves passing through the line of cruisers and battleships which were shortly to commence their bombardment. The whole passage to the beaches took place with clockwork precision as dawn approached, better in fact than in any of the exercises.

The LCG(L)s opened fire at predetermined targets at H-30, at approximetely 6,000 yards. Targets, which included gun emplacements and beach strong points, were allocated from specially prepared maps and their location was confirmed from low oblique photographs taken by the RAF. At this time the LCS(L)s were very much up with the leading group of LCAs containing the Armoured Vehicles Royal Engineers (AVREs). These were the "funnies" which were to demolish such beach obstacles as

An LCG(L) Mk 3 using her smoke generators to reposition off the beach



tetrahedra (metal constructions designed to hole assault craft). They were also to explode anti-personnel and anti-tank mines and lay materials suitable for tracked vehicles to cross the beaches. The LCS(L)s also had their own pre-selected targets but they immediately switched to opportunity targets as they closed the beach at H-5. Such was the effect of the bombardment from the air and sea that certain support craft were later to report that they "were looking for something to shoot at" as the first wave of troops jumped ashore. With very few exceptions this situation was only to last a very short time before many of the defences, thought to have been neutralised, started to open fire on the follow up waves. The LCFs were on the flanks of the assaulting craft and because of the total absence of the Luftwaffe, had not been brought into action. However they were not to be denied their participation in the great occasion and they closed with the assaulting craft to around 1,000 yards and brought to bear their maximum possible fire to stiffen up the assault on the beaches. With the assaulting troops clear of the beach it was not long before the craft were receiving calls from their BLO for indirect fire onto targets passed through the FOO.

In the area of La Riviere, King Sector Gold Beach at about H+1 with the tide rising, a company strength of follow up troops were pinned down by heavy enfilade machine gun fire from a hotel on the sea front. The target was engaged by three LCG(L), the property demolished and the guns silenced enabling the troops to clear the beach. However it was not long before the machine guns opened up again from another building a little way from the first. It required four interventions by the LCGs finally to silence this enemy position before it was overrun. In a further incident Destroyers, LCG and LCF were to be singled out for special mention by the Force Commander who in his report stated:

> *"not until close range bombardment from these units had been brought to bear were the 1st Hampshires able to capture Le Hamel."*

On Juno Beach the following incidents are worthy of note: LCG 1007 scored direct hits on concrete emplacements near Courseulles. LCG 831 was one of the few craft to receive damage and casualties, and she was extremely fortunate that the upper deck sandbagging prevented a major fire onboard. LCF 21 was probably the only craft of its type actually to beach on D-Day. This was caused through rudder damage and whilst on the beach in the Bernieres area she was still able to provide intense covering fire.

Meanwhile on Sword Beach, LCG 9 was probably the eastern-most craft in the initial assault. She was hit by an anti-tank shell and shortly after engaging her initial targets her port engine packed up. She regained full steam within twenty minutes and quickly returned to her station. She later developed problems with both her 4.7" guns, one of them having a broken firing bar which was replaced by the judicious insertion of a screwdriver!

The Supreme Commander, General Eisenhower, in his report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff mentioned the role of the landing craft stating:

> *"Such return fire as was made from the heavy batteries was directed mainly at the bombarding ships, not from the assault forces. The close support fire from destroyers, armed landing craft, rocket craft and self propelled artillery, which blasted the beaches as the infantry came close to shore, was particularly effective."*

The D-Day landings were not the carnage that many had predicted and with the exception of the LCS(L) component, the Support Squadrons carried out their tasks with little or no enemy interference or casualties. Possibly one of the most tense moments during the day was when Force Headquarters passed a 'warning order' to the Support Squadron indicating that they were to anticipate a move towards Omaha Beach where the American landing was being strenuously resisted. However the lodgement was eventually secured by the Americans without assistance but at very heavy cost. One craft LCS(L) 252 acted prematurely on the warning order and sailed west. The serious consequences of this action were detailed in the account of 'Cpl Haydon Morgan's One Day at War' in the latest RMHS Special Publication 'The Royal Marines and D-Day'.

Following the successful assaults, in mid-afternoon on June 6th, the three Force support squadrons were ordered to regroup as the 'Support Squadron Eastern Flank' and commence their second Operation *Neptune* task. The Squadron, as its name implies, was formed to support and defend the eastern flank of the bridgehead (areas later to be known as the Mulberry Harbours). The requirement was for the sixty odd vessels (20 MTBs and MLs being added to the 40 craft of the combined support squadrons) to be anchored in line ahead a cable's distance to the east of the main anchorage. This formation became known as the 'Trout Line'.

The threat to the bridgehead came nightly from both the air and the sea. Up to 50 single sorties of mine laying aircraft a night were commonplace and their persistence caused numerous shipping losses. The seaborne threat came from E and R boats, human torpedoes, explosive motor boats and specialised swimmers.

Thus the afternoon of D-Day saw the support craft take up their stations on the 'Trout Line' with RM detachments manning part of their armament and extensive lookouts posted on a four hours on, four hours off watchkeeping routine. No-one then imagined that this routine would continue from June 6th to September 1st when Le Havre was liberated. The Squadron was to have its successes shooting down aircraft, engaging attacking E and R boats, destroying explosive and radio-controlled motor boats and taking prisoners of their crews. Sadly losses also occurred within the Squadron with the sinking of three craft and the loss of over 100 men. During the three months period, the craft of the Squadron worked basically watch on stop on, and this gruelling routine was extremely wearing both to men and craft. After spending the night on the 'Trout Line' the craft returned daily to the main anchorage where they carried out normal ship's routine at sea; additionally the LCG(L)s were frequently called upon to carry out indirect shoots in support of land operations or to harass enemy activity along the coast of the Bay of Seine.

With certain exceptions the RM detachments of the Support Squadrons went into action in support of Operation *Neptune* with no combat experience. By the time the enemy had been cleared from the Seine estuary they had undergone a very severe examination of their skills, courage and endurance. These experiences and the expertise gained later stood the squadron in good stead and enabled it to acquit itself so gallantly in Operation *Infatuate* at Westkappel, another memorable date in the Corps calender.

Craft Allocation

(with names where known)

Force 'G'

Six LCG(L)

LCG(L) 1 (Lt G C Perkins, Sgt J McKenzie)

LCG(L) 2 (Lt J Martin-Ward)

LCG(L)s 3, 13, 17

LCG(L) 18 (Lt A Pocock, Sgt L Raven-Hill)

Seven LCF

LCF 19 (Lt H Bishop, Lt H Love, Sgt A Underwood-Smith)

LCF 20, 25, 26, 35,

LCF 36 (Lt L B Reynolds, Lt D Lewis, Sgt J McDonald)

LCF 38 (Lt K Hewitt)

Four LCS(L)

LCS(L)s 251, 252, 258, 259

Force 'J'

Seven LCG(L)

LCG(L) 680 (Lt J Caldwell)

LCG(L)s 681, 764, 831, 939, 1007, 1062

Seven LCF

LCF 1 (Lt P Fairhurst)

LCF 21 (Lt C J N Walker, Lt J Sowden, Sgt H Bass)

LCF 24 (LT W Juster, Lt P Jones, Sgt J Phillips)

LCF 29

LCF 32 (Lt Gill-Smith, Lt Howard-Henry, Sgt M Snell)

LCF 33 (Lt B Leeson, Lt D Parry, Sgt J Williams)

LCF 37 (Lt P Cowper)

Four LCS(L

LCS(L)s 202, 203, 204, 205

Force 'S'

Three LCG(L)

LCG(L) 9 (Lt D Carter)

LCG(L) 10 (Lt J Harvie)

LCG(L) 11 (Lt J Harding)

Four LCF

LCF 30 (Lt J Prigg)

LCF 34 (Lt W Kent, Sgt J Mason)

LCF 39

LCF 42 (Lt J Barclay, Lt R D Hale)

Three LCS(L)

LCS(L)s 253, 256, 260

Royal Marines Postal History

by Bob Swarbrick (RMHS)

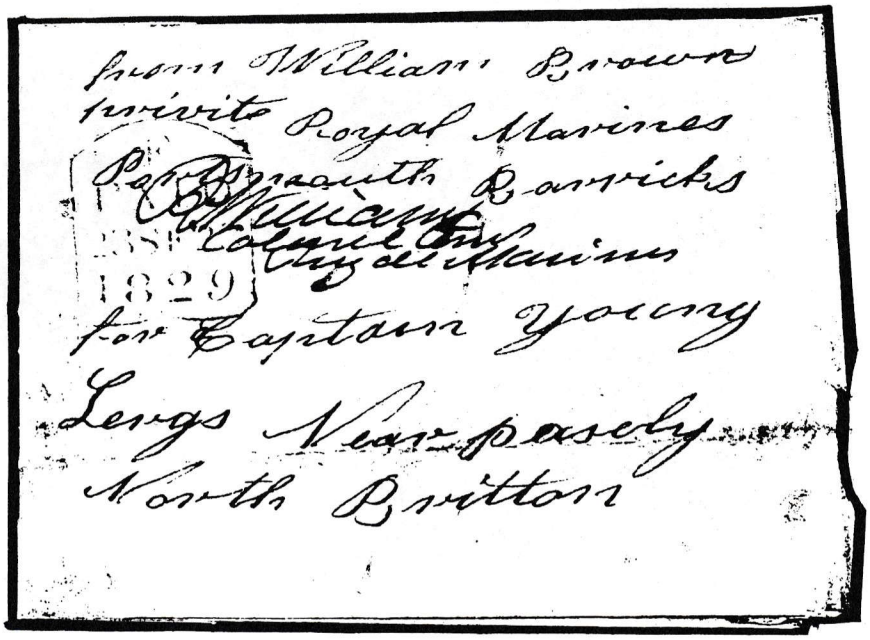
As a topic of conversation, my interest in Postal History produces various reactions. In everybody's heart there is a degree of curiosity, for the written word is often more poignant than a verbal description. Somehow the feeling of secrecy afforded by an envelope, allows the writer freedom to express thoughts than otherwise would remain unsaid.

After a lifetime collecting the postal history of the island of Jamaica, I cast around for a new interest. Most subjects have been dealt with, be it historical or social, each has its devotees, eager to expand their collection by including some new item, often at considerable expense. Because I wanted to break new ground, I looked around for some time before deciding on my theme, the Postal History of the Royal Marines. In my choice I felt fairly confident that it had not been tackled before, at least not in the degree I planned.

I had briefly served as a Hostilities Only marine way back in 1944. so I felt an affinity for the Corps and its amazing history but, lacking detailed knowledge, I paid a visit to the Museum to discuss my ideas with the Archivists, and to obtain their advice.

Arming myself with various reference books, I began my search, and was very quickly rewarded with my first prize, a letter from Greece, dated January 22nd 1862 from Pte Henry Smith, serving in HMS *Mars*. My next step involved a visit to the Public

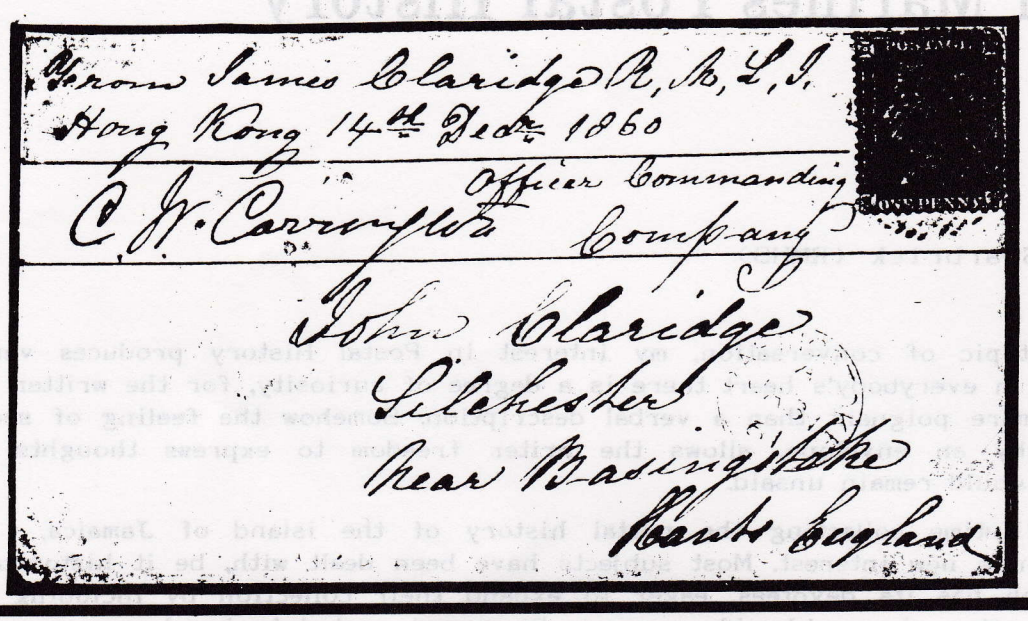
PORTSMOUTH, September 21st. 1829.



A concessionary rated letter from Private William Brown, Royal Marines, in Portsmouth Barracks. Brown was in the 66th Company stationed in Clarence Barracks, and the letter is countersigned by Colonel Richard Williams who was, at that time the Colonel Commandant of the Portsmouth Division.

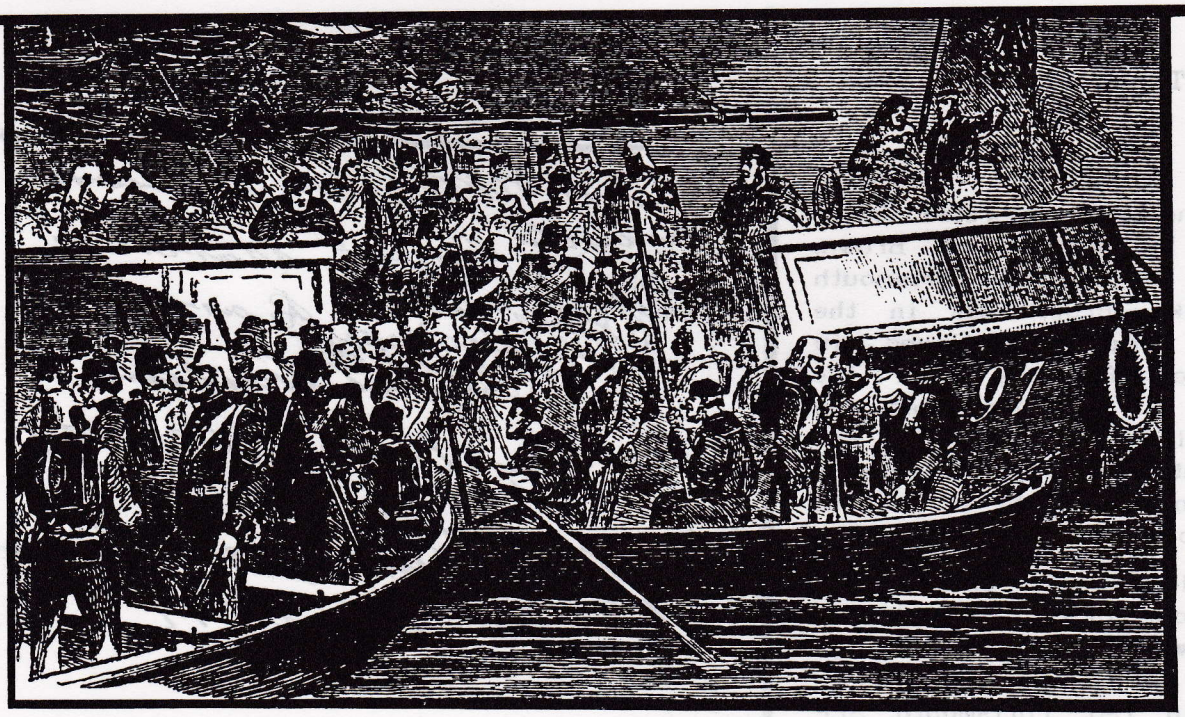
The letter has the London tombstone, in red, dated 23 Sep 1829 with a large manuscript '1' in red on the front, verso, also in red, Portsmouth SEP 22nd 1829

THE ROYAL MARINES



The Second "Opium War" 1856-60.

A Concessionary rated letter, dated 14th. December 1860. Although all resistance in the South had ceased, the situation in the North was still very dangerous, and actions continued throughout 1860. A major assault against Chusan was planned, and the Marines embarked in HONG KONG, in a final effort to resolve the impasse, and to capture Peking. This aim was achieved 12th. November 1860.



Record Office at Kew, where I viewed the ship's log, and read of the reason for her presence in these waters. From that moment I knew that I had made a wise choice of subject and that it was going to be a rewarding study.

Postal History is, in reality, a study of Social History, for letter writers often commit to paper, sights and thoughts that otherwise would be lost forever. For example, I have a letter written by a young marine acting as an escort to prisoners en route to the penal colonies in Tasmania in 1838. In it he describes the heart-rending farewell of a young man, in manacles, and his mother and sister, and how he tried to hide his face in her shawl. In another, the writer, in HMS *Dryad* off Madagascar, speaks of the action in which Lieutenant M B Fowle, with a landing party of 20 marines armed with a Gatling gun assisted in the evacuation of the British Consul and his wife to Mauritius.

From quite humble beginnings, my collection has grown to some 200 items, ranging from the early 1700s to the Falklands conflict, and still it grows. Love letters, poignant reminders of long periods of separation due to the exigency of war; of infidelities, real or imaginary; promotion, or lack of it, and more - much more. Nothing really changes, just alter the date at the top from 1794 to 1994, and you would read the same 'flannel', the same lame excuses that have stood the test of time. There is much truth in the saying 'Tell it to the Marines', though I sometimes think it should be rephrased as 'Told by a Marine'!

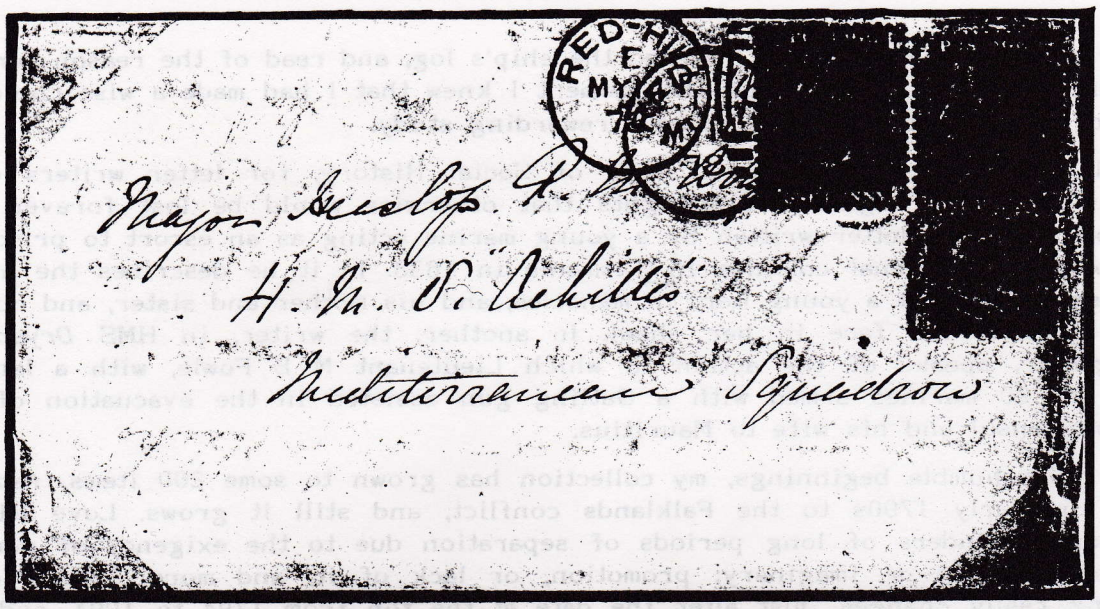
I have learned so much about the Corps' history, the Carlist Wars, the Siege of Monte Video, the Opium Wars - they are all there. So to are mentions of long forgotten units, the RM camel Corps, the Sub-marine Engineers, and many more.

It is difficult to pick out favourites, but this one I like because it is so unusual. Dated 7th October 1834 it is from a Private in the 74th Company in the RM Barracks in Portsmouth. In the early, days, due to the low pay, a system was devised to allow other ranks to send and receive letters at the privileged rate of 1d. So that there was no abuse to this concession, strict rules were laid down which had to be observed to the letter. Firstly the letter had to contain nothing other than personal or family matters; also it had to be signed by the man's Commanding Officer in a prescribed manner; and lastly it had to be prepaid. This latter was most important, for if a letter was charged at the full rate, it could well cost the recipient 1/7d, a great deal of money in those days.

From the text of this letter, it would seem that bthe writer had had difficulties in the past, so to minimise the risk, and to ensure that the letter qualified for the special rate, he stitched a penny coin on the envelope, with the instructioins to the postman to cut the thread. Possibly he was unable to hand it in to the Post Office himself, so he adopted this strange method of prepayment.

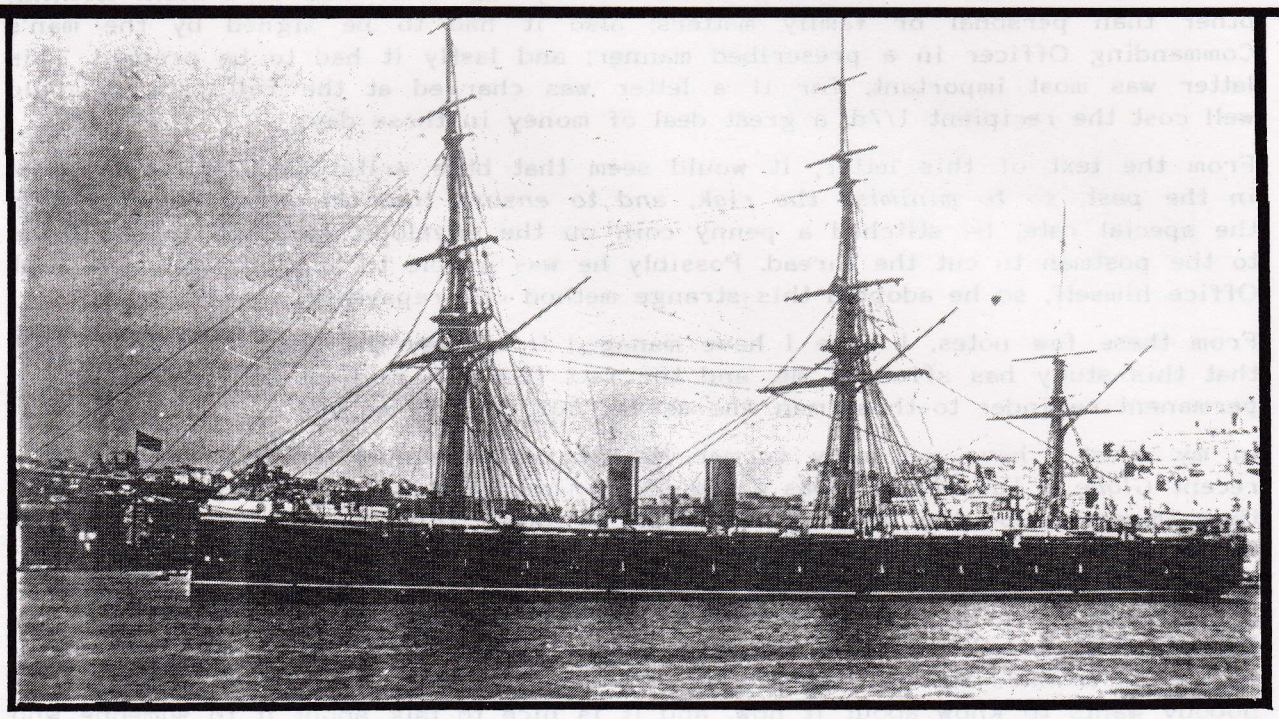
From these few notes, I hope I have managed to convey the pleasure and interest that this study has afforded me, and the fact that I have been able to assemble a permanent reminder to those men who served our country so well.

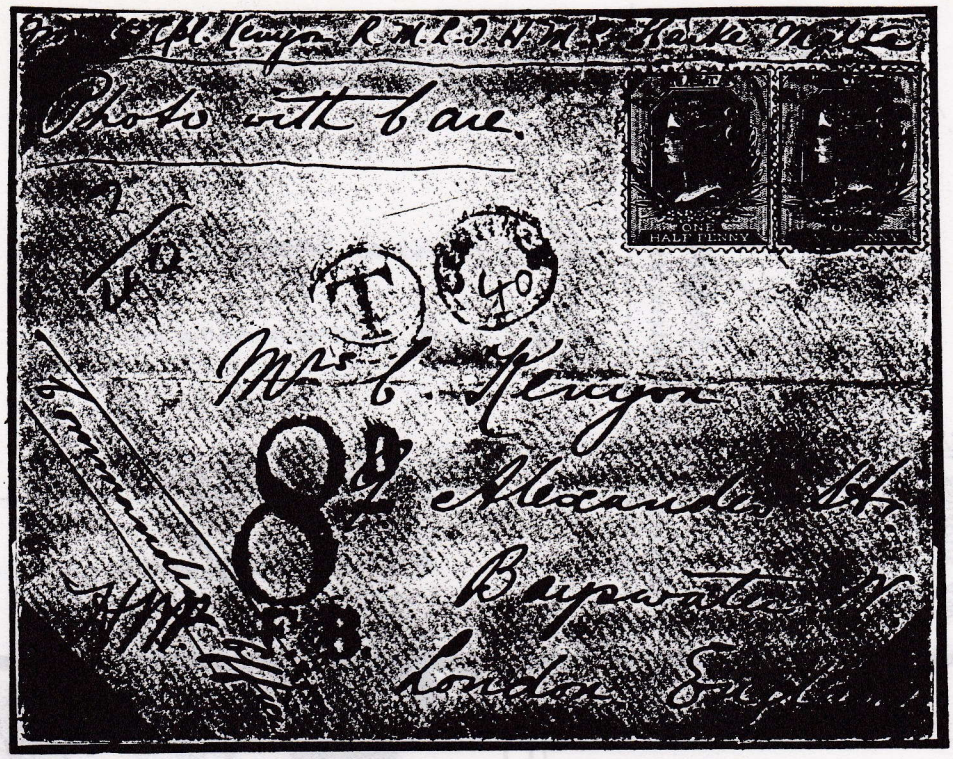
In my quest I have met many former Marines, and listened to their stories. In a recent *Globe & Laurel* there was a request for people to commit to paper or on tape their memories of the 1939-45 war, for so often things are quickly forgotten. Recently in answer to an advert I placed in a local newspaper, I met an ex-Martin who served with 44(RM) Commando in the Far East and went through the Arakan campaign. He described in detail all the problems they had had, the privations they had endured, and their return to normality and civilian life. As he left, he cried a little, and thanked me for listening to his 'ramblings'. He said "thank you, because nobody wants to know about it now, and it is nice to talk about it to someone who appreciates what we suffered". I felt very humble and I knew that I was doing something worthwhile.



H.M.S. "ACHILLES" May 1879.

The "Achilles" was a modified "Warrior" iron-clad, carrying 44,000 sq. ft. of canvas, the largest amount ever by a British warship. She would have carried three Royal Marine officers, & 124 RMA NCO's and artillerymen, making her one of the most powerful vessels afloat. She was a great improvement on "Warrior" and remained in service much longer, spending most of the time in Gibraltar, with the Mediterranean Squadron.





15th. January 1897.

L/Cpl. C.Kenyon R.M.L.I. on H.M.S."Hawke"

A Concessionary rated letter, correctly signed, but with enclosures, therefor the special rate of 1d. did not apply.
The Maltese Post office added the "T-40" hand stamp, which was translated into 8d. by the British Post Office.

To obtain the concessionary rate, the conditions had to be observed. Apart from the more obvious, there must be no enclosures. In this case, a photograph was included in the letter.





Christmas 1917.

A Card, designed by a member of the Royal Navy Division, and used by a Royal Marine Light Infantry private to England. This camp, **Dyrotz**, housed most of the R.N.D. captured in Belgium in 1914.

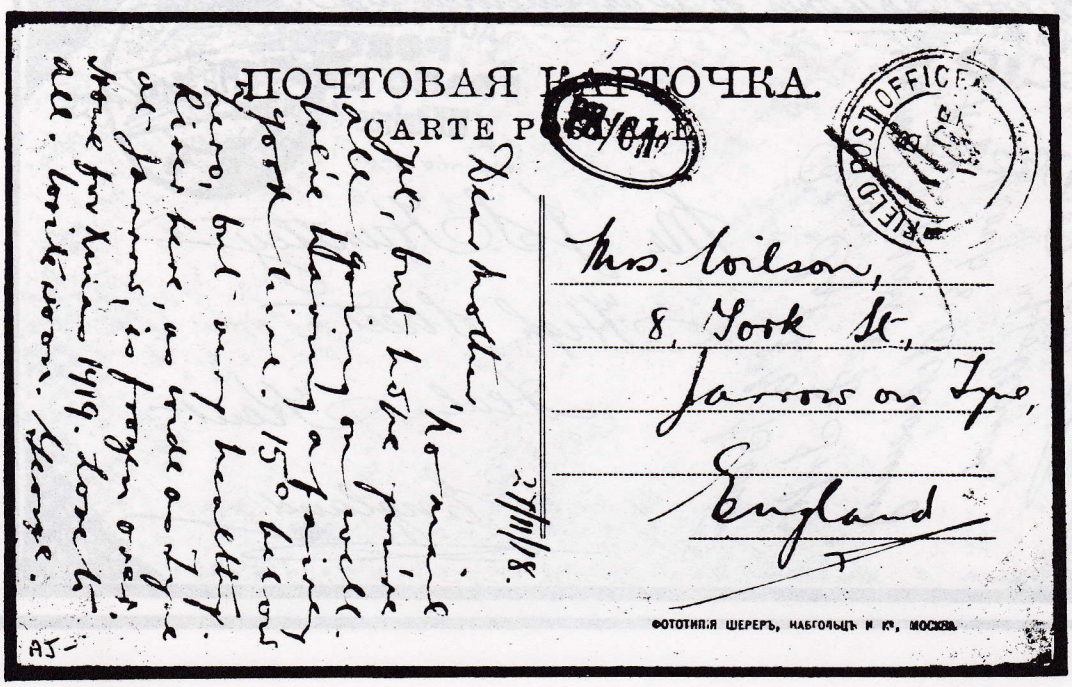
Most members of this Force crossed into Holland, and were interned for the duration .



13th. August 1918.

A letter from a member of the RMLI interned in Holland, at Scheveringen. Although officially classed as Internees, they enjoyed many privileges, including leave in England, pay and promotion.



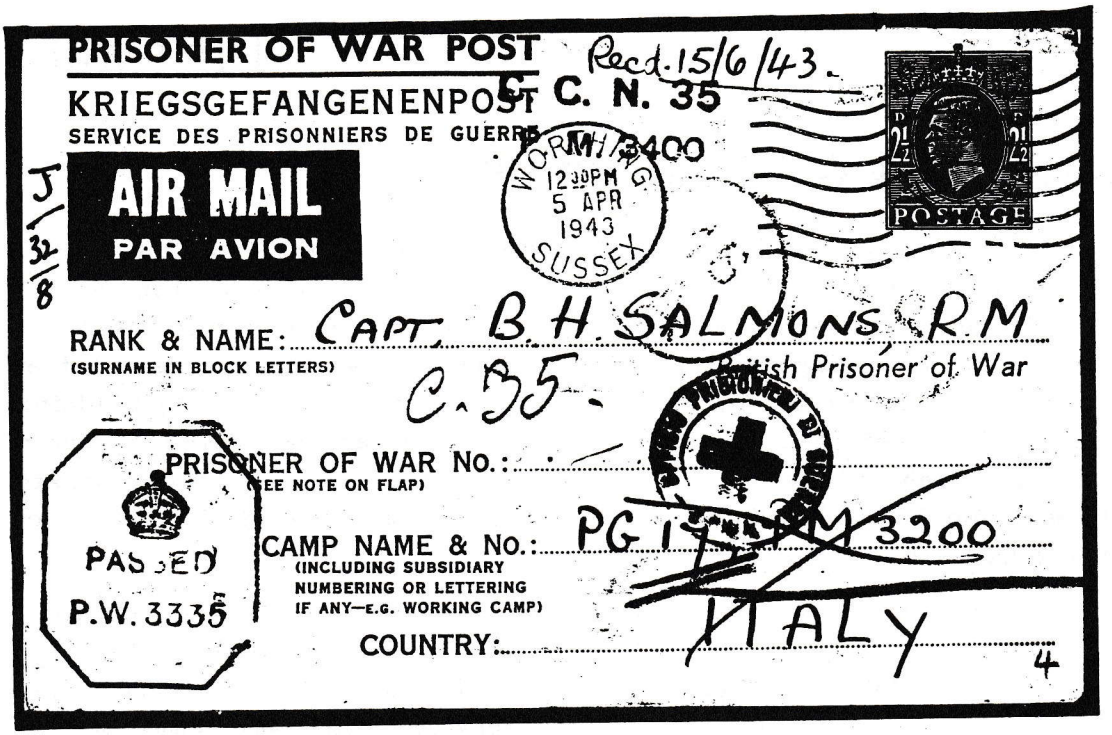




The Royal Marines Field Force, in **MURMANSK**, North Russia.

In October 1919, the Monks of **Solovetzky**, which was an island Monestry, requested protection from the Bolsheviks, who were expected to attack the Monastry, A token force was landed by"Attentive", supported by 18 Finnish regulars.

To confuse observers, the men were ordered to march in, and out, of the gates, to create the impression of a larger force.

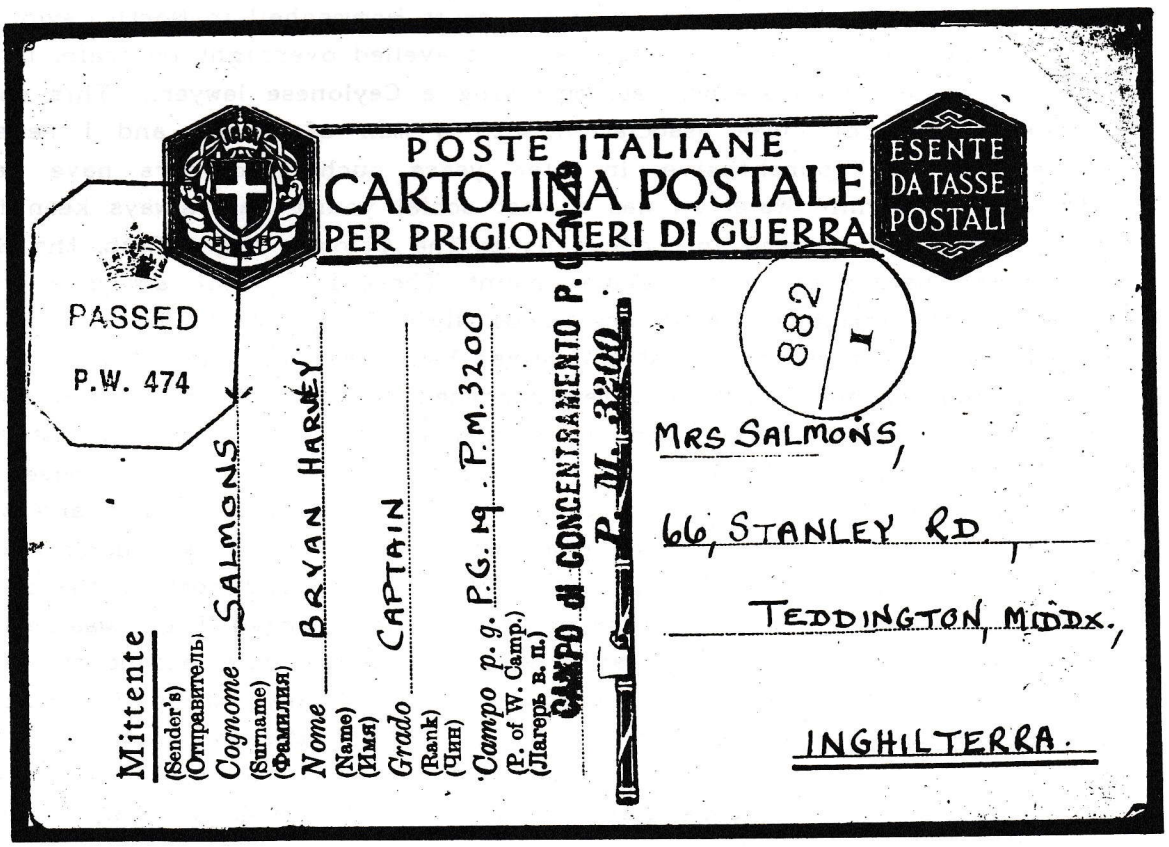


PRISONER OF WAR POST
KRIEGSGEFANGENENPOST
SERVICE DES PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE
AIR MAIL
PAR AVION

Recd. 15/6/43.
C. N. 35
M 3400
WORTHING 12.30PM 5 APR 1943 SUSSEX
POSTAGE
J/32/8

RANK & NAME: CAPT. B.H. SALMONS R.M.
(SURNAME IN BLOCK LETTERS)
British Prisoner of War
C.35.
PRISONER OF WAR No.: —
(SEE NOTE ON FLAP)
CAMP NAME & No.: PG 19 M 3200
(INCLUDING SUBSIDIARY NUMBERING OR LETTERING IF ANY—E.G. WORKING CAMP)
COUNTRY: ITALY
4

PASSED
P.W. 3335



POSTE ITALIANE
CARTOLINA POSTALE
PER PRIGIONIERI DI GUERRA
ESENTE DA TASSE POSTALI

PASSED
P.W. 474

882/I

Mittente (Sender's / Отправитель)
Cognome (Surname / Фамилия) SALMONS
Nome (Name / Имя) BRYAN HARVEY
Grado (Rank / Чин) CAPTAIN
Campo p. g. (P. of W. Camp.) P.G. 19 P.M. 3200
(Лагерь в. п.)
CAMPO di CONCENTRAMENTO P.G. 19 P. M. 3200

MRS SALMONS,
66, STANLEY RD.,
TEDDINGTON, MIDDX.,
INGHILTERRA.

Reminiscences of a Wartime Officer - Part XIII

by Major Patrick G A Ennor (RMHS)

My original appointment had been as GSO2, but in fact right from the start I had been acting as AA and QMG. As it happened both the DAAG Goulding and the DAQMG James Lean, although they were both junior to me in service, were on paper, senior to me owing to the rather curious rule which ordained that seniority should be determined by seniority in substantive rank. Cyril Goulding had become a Major before I, and James Lean, on transfer from RNVR had been given his naval seniority as a Captain Royal Marines. In fact it all worked perfectly well and harmoniously but I must confess that I was disappointed not to reach the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

On the "G" staff of which Barclay Grant was the head we had two agreeable young men as G3s. Johnnie Waterton and Gordon Duff Stewart. Johnnie Waterton had come from a cloak and dagger unit called the Special Operations Group composed of officers and men from all the services. This was commanded by Colonel Humphry Tollemache and had its home at Hammenheil in North Ceylon. One of my early visits was to this camp, and I travelled overnight by train. I found myself in a two berth sleeper, accompanying a Ceylonese lawyer. This was my first experience of close association with a man of colour and I remember feeling somewhat apprehensive. In later years such encounters have become commonplace. Johnnie Waterton was a most social young man, always keen for a party, and it was he who introduced us to the Colombo Night Club, the Silver Faun, which became our most regular haunt. There is I think always a certain suggestion of raffishness about the words Night Club. Nothing could have been further from the truth so far as the Silver Faun was concerned. It was the acme of respectability and although a few hardened spirits used to remain playing poker dice it closed every night punctually at 12 o'clock the hour at which London Night Clubs are just about beginning to come to life! The premises were quite nice and the food was very good, but the band was execrable and played almost continuous waltzes. How the place was ever made to pay I don't know as the subscription and charges for food were very low, and most of the patrons brought their own drink - for which no corkage was charged. There was really no alternative to this, as liquor was practically unobtainable except to service people through the NAAFI from which we drew a monthly ration of 1 bottle of whisky, 1 bottle of gin, four bottles of beer, and 6 bottles of "various" - wines and liqueurs. Whisky was almost unobtainable except for this ration, and even in the big hotels customers were quite often reduced to drinking arrack. It never seemed to do me any harm! The practice was to reserve the beer ration to drink on Sundays at curry tiffin, and the height of hospitality was to offer one's guest a glass of English (in fact Scottish) beer. There was a large choice of wines and liqueurs and some of the wines - which came from South Africa were excellent.

Though he was, in fact, an abstemious young man. Johnnie Waterton was accustomed to behave in an uninhibited way which is generally associated with those whose reserve has been broken by alcohol. He had a curious accomplishment of being able to bark like a dog and it used to delight him to crawl under the tables and then set up a tremendous bow-wow-wow-woof-woof-woof to the consternation and astonishment of those dining above him. No doubt this was very silly and not very decorous, but it was really very amusing, and people were ready to be amused by almost anything.

Gordon Duff Stewart was a good looking and agreeable young man, and even in a society where good looking and pleasant young men were at a discount he came in for a good deal of the social life which he much enjoyed. In fact so determined a party goer was he that he was sometimes rather jaded in the mornings and we determined on a mild leg-pull. Accordingly we had a signal, properly typed out, passed through the registry, and put to await him on his desk. The signal contained the famous quotation:

"My candle burns at both its ends
It will not last the night,
But Ah, my foes and Oh, my friends,
It gives a lovely light."

This young man formerly known as "the boy" now became "the candle-burner" a soubriquet which he continued to justify. Gordon introduced us to the FANYs who worked for Force 136 and who lived in a camp some miles out of Colombo - it seemed actually in the jungle, and I am convinced that dining there one night I heard a leopard cough, and saw its eyes staring at us from just outside the surrounding wire. Through the candle burner we also met Pamela Purser a WRNS officer in the department of the Flag Officer Air, Admiral Clement Moody. Not long after our arrival Pamela Purser was married to a Naval Lieutenant, Sir William Blunden and honoured us by asking us to act as ushers at the wedding.

Pamela Purser was in command of the WRNS detachment which took part in the VE parade and to us, trained in the production of orders in strict military sequence, style and phraseology, her orders of which I still have a copy, were fascinating. They were couched in delightfully informal, almost conversational phraseology, containing items such as "when you arrive at such and such a place you will see this on your right and that on your left. Well don't take any notice of this but further to the left you will see "Chief", now keep your eyes on her" and so on and so forth. This effusion ended up with an exhortation to the girls to "put up a good show", which despite the rather unconventional style of their instructions they certainly did.

A rather dreadful story which was current was that a Wren who was attacked defended either her purse or her virtue to such good purpose with her high-heeled shoe that she actually killed her Tamil assailant. Officialdom - thoroughly scared at the prospect of this girl being incarcerated in a Ceylon goal and put on trial - for once moved swiftly and within a few hours she was in an aeroplane on her way back to England.

One day we received a docket which dealt with the granting of service status to various Admiralty civilian technicians in order that they might be entitled to

the protection of the Geneva Convention. Some genius had suggested that these men be given the rank of Colour Sergeant Royal Marines. This was palpably outrageous and I rushed into the General full of indignation, and prevailed upon him to allow me to write a minute to the effect that the rank of CSgt Royal Marines was the reward of long laborious and exacting service, and should not be thus lightly handed out to a civilian technician however admirable he might be. I went on to suggest that the best way out of the dilemma would be to appoint these individuals "Lieutenants (Special) RNVR for which purpose this rank would appear to be ideally suited.

The attitude of the Navy towards ranks and appointments has always struck me as curious. They have only reluctantly accepted at all the principle of acting ranks and rank and pay for the job - adhering strictly to the rule of promotion by seniority and service only. Even now it is possible to find identical duties being performed by a Sub Lt or a Lt Cdr. Either one is holding an appointment far too onerous for his status or the other is holding one far inferior to his. Nearly all wartime officers were given RNVR commissions although the holders were not reservists, and were frequently not volunteers. I can imagine the outcry that would have been made had the War Office blandly issued Territorial commissions to all war-time military officers, and why the pre-war RNVR officers did not protest has always astonished me. No doubt the reason is the reverential attitude which they habitually adopt towards those who wear the sacred straight stripes, on their sleeves, and the orthodox Britannia smell under their noses.

Another docket which received our attention dealt with the vexed question of the class of railway travel in India and Ceylon to be permitted to WRNS ratings. One school of thought held that as European women they should be allowed first-class warrants. The opposite camp considered that, as they were other ranks, the second class travel granted to male other ranks was adequate. This issue had developed into quite a high level and acrimonious controversy, and somebody - either ingenious, ingenuous, or frivolous, had written a minute suggesting that these girls should be protected, when travelling, by an escort of Royal Marines! This got us onto "the marking" and having got in on an entertaining subject like this, we were naturally in no hurry to take ourselves off! I remember the minute of a Senior WRNS Officer was to the effect that her concern was not with the comfort but with the morals of the girls under her command, and that it was for this reason that she pressed for First Class travel for them. She was followed, in a much later minute, by an obviously mysogonistic old Commander, who wrote "Not continuing with Minute . . . . by . . . . . WRNS. If in fact her concern is with the moral welfare, rather that the comfort of the girls in her charge, I suggest that this is more likely to be ensured in the Second Class where the upright position is inevitable rather than in the First Class where the prone position is available."

As the Main Fleet Anchorage was at Trincomalee we had to pay a good many visits there, and these journeys were performed by air, in aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm. It was alleged that the pilots of these aircraft had been transferred to this duty owing to an inability in putting their machines down on the flight decks of carriers; certainly the general atmosphere of this flying was somewhat lighthearted and passengers - in excess of the permitted pay-load used from

time to time to be carried on the "old boy" (or indeed "old girl") basis. One occasion as an aircraft was taxiing to the runway a WRNS rating appeared and hailed the pilot begging for a lift to Colombo where she had heard her boyfriend's ship had just arrived. The pilot replied; "Well we're full up - you'll have to strap-hang." So the door was opened, she scrambled in and strap-hang she did - to Colombo.

In addition to being rather chancy some of these young pilots were not very brilliant navigators - and used to plot their general courses with a blunt pencil on 1/4 inch maps and then rely on map reading and landmarks. Our General had a story that seeing his pilot peering down rather anxiously he enquired what was amiss, and the pilot replied that he was looking for an elephant which he had noted as a landmark on his outward flight. He seemed quite put out when the General suggested that the elephant might perhaps have moved on during the intervening six hours.

General Newman seems to have been rather unfortunate in some of his flying experiences as on another occasion - flying from South Devon to Wales, his aeroplane received the unwelcome attention of an AA Battery which was supposed to be firing at a drogue. No doubt to this period belongs the story of the pilot of a drogue towing aircraft who finding the burst coming too close signalled plaintively "I am pulling, not pushing this b . . . . y thing." A bowdlerised version of the same story is contained in another signal; "We aim to please. You aim too, please."

One of our visits was to the *Richlieu*, which the Commander-in-Chief has described as "the smartest ship in the fleet." I was in attendance on the General, and we were bountifully entertained in the Captain's cabin. After several gins I felt sufficiently emboldened to essay my school-boy French, and was asked by the the Captain of the *Richlieu if I had had any contact with his ship before. Fortunately I decided that my command of French was not adequate to embark on an account of the Dakar incident, as seen from the other sister.*

A party of us also visited the US battleship Colombia, when she came into Colombo. This was purely a social call but when our boat approached the gangway the coxswain was told to "lie off". There was the usual gangway staff on the Quarter Deck but apparently my red banded and gold laced cap had created an entirely spurious impression of grandeur and by the time we were allowed to go on board half the ship's company had been mustered onto the Quarter Deck to do honour to the occasion! We were, inevitably most lavishly entertained; there was of course, no alcohol, but we were given enormous helpings of ice-cream, and I remember being much intrigued by the iced-water "fawcets" (sic) which were distributed lavishly all over the ship.

Another very agreeable instance of "ship-visiting" was when I received a signal from Horace Firth RPC (request pleasure of your company) to dine that night in the *Renown* - of which ship he was the Gunnery Officer. Horace went on to say that no excuse would be accepted and gave the time of the boat at the jetty. So I gladly made in reply WMP (with much pleasure) and duly went off to spend a very convivial evening with Horace, and David Farrer - who was the Captain of Marines, and also a Marlburian. *Renown* established and maintained throughout her career, a tremendous reputation as an efficient and happy ship. It is

remarkable how often the reputation which a ship obtains originally does continue with her in subsequent commissions. Another illustration of this is afforded conversely by the *Nelson*. She too came into Colombo in 1945 where she maintained the sad reputation which seemed always to have haunted her.

We also paid a visit to one of the new class of minesweepers - known as Fleet Sweepers. The end of hostilities in Europe had released numbers of regular Naval Officers and this ship - which earlier in the war would almost certainly have had a RNR or RNVR officer in command, now had as her Captain a senior RN Lieutenant who was a friend of Daphne. We were much impressed by the Captain's quarters, and by the excellent luncheon - concluded with finger bowls of rose water - with which he regaled us.

In Colombo I sampled Chinese food for the first time. There was quite a number of Chinese restaurants which we used to patronise from time to time for dinner. They were very cool and pleasant and having no licences used to sell as drink the most excellent fruit juices, which we would lace with our own gin - brought for the purpose in a pocket flask. Sometimes we were very nicely entertained in the Guest Room of the WRNS Officers Quarters, and there was also a famous restaurant which had been established for many years and where the custom was to sit on the first floor, and in a gay and abandoned way to throw the bones out of the windows to the road below to the dogs which used to cluster in regular anticipation!

Everyone who has been to the East knows about Oriental matches, but I think the extreme limit of condemnation was displayed by an American GI who having bought a new box, and finding that the first match fired - promptly threw the rest of the box away. His estimated return was one match per box! The initiated acquired the trick of striking these matches forwards, but an unfortunate result of this method occurred once when several of us were having luncheon at the Galle Face Hotel. I had struck a match to light a cigarette for one of the girls - using the forward strike technique and when, as usual, the head fell off, I thought nothing of it and merely struck another match. To my consternation a few moments later one of the waiters approached me and agitatedly pointed to a lady at a nearby table. From her head a thin spiral of smoke was ascending and it was at once evident that my match-head had soared through the air and landed on and ignited this lady's hair - of which she - her coiffure being thick and elaborate - remained in ignorance. Clearly this situation demanded instant action without the exchange of civilities so I dashed to beat out the lady's conflagration, while at the same time repelling the onslaught and protests of her affronted and infuriated swain!

Our principal task after the end of hostilities in the East was in handling drafts of men to be returned to the United Kingdom for demobilisation. A transit camp had been provided for this purpose between Colombo and Kandy and Nogs Fiennes had been appointed to command it. He was very anxious to get to the British Pacific Fleet as he had an idea that from Australia he might manage to take passage across the Pacific to USA where he thought he might find a postwar job. Nogs used therefore to press me to get him a posting to the British Pacific Fleet, but anxious though I was to help an old and valued friend, who had done much to help me, there was nothing I could do. No new appointments were being

made, and our orders in general were to send people westward rather than eastward. I was very worried about this and found it difficult to explain to Nogs that such matters were not within my discretion - or indeed the General's.

In the end I decided to go up to spend a day with Nogs at his camp and took with me James Lean the DAQMG. As we had a large empty car we took - for the sake of the outing - James Lean's fiancee, Daphne Spiller, and Stephanie Kerans whose husband-to-be later earned great fame as Captain of the *Amethyst*. Nogs Fiennes received us with his unvarying hospitality and courtliness and I did my best to explain the position to him. But I shall always feel that he considered I had somehow failed him.

One very satisfying task which developed upon us was to do all we were able to speed on their homeward journey was those who had been prisoners in the Far East. Word reached me that Charles Verdon, once of my company, and his Captain of Marines, Claude Aylwin, would shortly be passing through Colombo. Both had been in the *Prince of Wales* and had been taken prisoner when she and the *Repulse* had been sunk off the east coast of Malaya. I got up a small lunch party of welcome and asked three of the WRNS to attend and provide a little feminine society and livening influence. There had been a good deal of speculation as to the probable condition of men who had experienced the horrors of being prisoners of the Japanese, and we were exhorted to avoid any conversation regarding their experiences. This advice was, I think, bad. I think the tension would have been relieved had we not so assiduously diverted all talk from the subject which was inevitably uppermost in all our minds. However I think our luncheon was quite a success and I was glad to be able to do even that little for brother officers who had experienced two of the worst horrors of war. I had also been told to be very sparing with the alcohol, but we did have a little gin before, and some beer with our luncheon, and Daphne writing to me a note of thanks from the basement office where she worked, as she said like a "troglodyte" complained that even those modest libations had had a very soporific effect.

Demobilisation was proceeding rapidly and smoothly and I felt that before leaving Ceylon I should make an effort to see something more of the country. We had made an excursion to Kandy and seen the Peradinyha Gardens, and the Buddhist shrine of the Temple of the Tooth. I now took the opportunity to accept a kind invitation to stay for a few days leave on a tea estate near Adam's Peak and then went on for a short spell to the hill station at Newara Aliya. Shortly after my return we were involved in staging a display at which the Royal Marines band Beat Retreat and a guard was paraded, on the Galle Face Green at which the C-in-C took the Salute. After this the Royal Marines Officers gave a large cocktail party. This was held in a recently opened NAAFI Club and was generally claimed a great success. This I can say without any lack of modesty as the arrangements were all made by James Lean and the NAAFI authorities and I was not in anyway involved. It does seem rather strange that so large and elaborate a club should have been opened after the end of hostilities but presumably the plans had been made, and approval given months before, and the project had acquired such impetus that it could not be stopped. One of the Wrens whom we knew was always addressed by the soubriquet Brown Sugar. No one seemed to know why but this name had become so firmly

established that one was reluctant to enquire its origin. But at one of the farewell parties consequent upon demobilisation and repatriation a naval officer who had been in the same section as she, was sufficiently emboldened to ask "Why are you called Brown Sugar?" Instantly came back the reply "Because I'm sweet and not too refined."

While many officers and other ranks of all services and both sexes were being drafted homeward there was also a certain amount of forward traffic to Singapore. One of the first to leave at the time of the re-occupation was Frank Little who took with him his RM Provost Company and became Naval Provost Marshal in Singapore. Many of the girls found service life in the East so agreeable that there were always more applicants to remain than there were posts available and the unsuccessful applicants were graded as redundant.

It will be readily understood that when large numbers of young men and young women are set down in a strange environment, living a somewhat artificial life, under considerable emotional strain that the fruits of love from time to time gave signs of blossoming. Under such circumstances the girl was speedily packed off home to her family. One kind hearted creature whose good nature exceeded her educational attainments, finding another girl sitting disconsolately on her bed sobbing her heart out asked: "What is the matter?" Tearfully the reply came; I'm being sent home, because I'm redundant." "Oh, dear" said her solicitous friend "How dreadful. What ever will you tell your Mum?".

Although our trip out in the *Maloja* had had its compensations I felt that I did not wish to make the voyage home in a "dry" and overcrowded troopship, and I asked Cyril Goulding to fix me up with a passage by Grey Funnel Line - in one of HM Ships. This he arranged in the *Kedah*. This vessel had I think been engaged in the Straits Steam Ship Company's coastal runs round the Malay Peninsular. She had been taken over by the Navy and had recently worn the flag of Admiral Moore as Flag Officer Singapore. She was now on her way to England for pay off and for a full refit, which she badly needed. Both her engines wore down at intervals, and her steering engine too collapsed when we were a day out from Karachi, and just after we had received a gale warning. She was fully loaded with officers and men. all on passage from the Pacific or Far East and many of these became very restless at the frequent delays and much protracted journey, especially as she had been due to reach England before Christmas.

Finally she limped into Suez and there the attempt to proceed any further under her own power was abandoned. We, with paying off pennant flying were subjected to the ignominy of having one Suez Canal tug to tow us and another astern to stop us. In this wise we proceeded through the Canal, and about half way through we encountered the *Superb*, on her way out, newly commissioned and glittering with the gleaming paintwork and dazzling brass of peace time. The ship's company of the *Kedah* were not on the whole of the highest quality and were distinctly "demob conscious". The limit was reached when the rating who was in charge of the Ensign halyards entirely failed to comprehend the order to "dip" and made a pretty poor performance when this was interpreted to him as "pull down the b . . . . y flag". I made a hasty retreat below decks while this ill executed civility was being accorded to the *Superb*.

On reaching Port Said, Philip Penfold, the Senior RM Officer in our party explained that it had been decided to move all those taking passage in the *Kedah*, to the *Batory* which was due to sail for UK and had room to take us in various accommodating spaces, which had been provided for trooping, and I believe for transporting refugees. Certainly the accommodation was pretty rough and consisted of tiered bunks in some sort of structure at the forward end of the upper deck. However we were all anxious to get home and were grateful for anything that offered and indeed for the prompt and efficient handling of our problems by the authorities.

The Captain of the *Batory* was an Austrian, who habitually wore the Iron Cross, which he had won in World War I. As an adherent of the Honhenzollerns he had great pride in the Old Imperial Navy and a deep hatred and contempt for Hitler and his gang of Nazi scoundrels. He had served on the side of the Allies through out the second war.

After a day or two in Port Said, where we paid the inevitable visits to Mr Simon Artz emporium and other establishments we sailed for the UK. Christmas Day 1946 was spent at sea: there were quite a number of children on board and we did our best to give them a good time, and have as cheerful a day as possible. Regularly in the evenings we would hang over the rail, looking at the setting sun and "watching for the flash", in the time honoured way.After a rapid and uneventual passage, we berthed at Glasgow. I just had time to telephone my wife before catching the night train to London, and early next morning I was at last home again in the bosom of my family, where Annabella, aged three took much pleasure in drawing my attention to her new white socks.

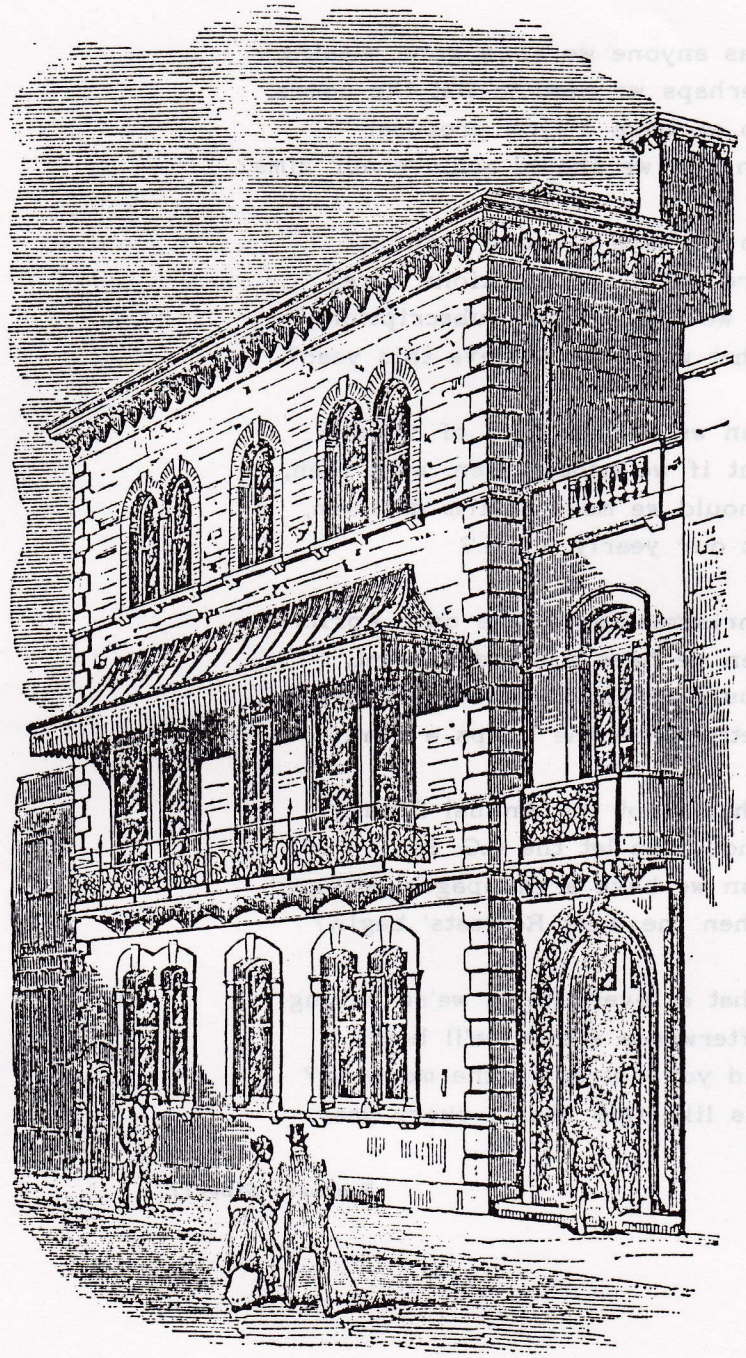
It was necessary for me to report to my Port Division for demobilisation. So having deposited my baggage and spent one night at home, I attired myself in some uniform more suitable for Eastney's august precincts than the shabby battledress which I had worn for most of the voyage, and repaired to Portsmouth. Here the demobilisation run was carried through with much speed and efficiency. I was presented with my pay statement of account, a Post Office Savings Book for my gratuity and my demobilisation order. I was taken by car to collect the authorised outfit of plain clothes, and after one night in Barracks departed from Portsmouth dressed for the last time in the uniform of a Royal Marine. By taking the train which stopped at Cobham I was able to spend one night with my mother, and the next day was back home - after six years and a month - once more a civilian.

Concluded

Every October the RMHS holds its Annual Dinner in the Royal Naval Club, Portsmouth. Here is an account of the Club, sent in by Colin Bowden BEM (RMHS), that was published in The Illustrated London News *of March 6th, 1869*

The Royal Naval Club - Portsmouth

The Royal Naval Club was lately established in Portsmouth for the accommodation of officers of the naval service, Mr. J. Wallace Hoare being honorary secretary to this institution. It occupies the building formerly belonging to Messrs Atkins and Son, bankers, and more recently to the Hampshire Banking Company, in Green-row. The premises have been remodelled under the supervision of Mr. Absalom, of Southsea, as builder and architect. The front elevation abutting on Green-row is of an ornamental character, having a recessed doorway of stone, with a balcony above. The moulded jambs are enriched with sculptured aquatic plants and other appropriate ornamentation; the key-stone, with the arms or insignia of the club - a foul anchor and Roman naval crown, in high relief. The front of the main building is of grey glazed brickwork, with red dressings to the windows above the balcony, surmounted with a stone moulded and consolled cornice. At the west end of the basement is an entrance for servants and tradesmen. On the ground floor are a handsome hall and vestibule of ample dimensions, with entrance from Green-row at the east end of the main building; coffee or dining room, about 35ft by 19ft 6in, lighted from Green-row and facing towards the Governor's-green; steward's office and stores, servant's hall, kitchen and scullery, and other offices. On the first floor is a handsome reading or drawing room, similar in size to the coffee-room, lighted from Green-row, with access to a stone balcony, giving views of the Solent, Governor's-green, the Lines, Southsea Esplanade, a verandah above screening the drawing-room windows from the excessive glare of the sun at this aspect. The secretary's room, adjoining, over the principal entrance, has an access to separate balcony, with similar prospect. The writing-room, also adjoining, opens from west end of drawing-room, with separate access from staircase and passage. The lavatory and other offices are the same as on the ground floor. There is a servant's bed-room, and separate staircase thereto; three dressing-rooms and a bath-room, with access from main staircase, above the servant's hall and stores. On the second floor is the billiard-room, 25ft by 19ft 6in, lighted and ventilated from lofty lantern sashes above, in addition to the windows in principal front, the view from which commands the Solent from Cowes to Selsea Bill, the common, the Lines, and garrison chapel. The smoking-room, adjoining, is similarly lighted and ventilated. There is a doorway on the landing to the lead flat, balustraded, and to open observatory above the roof of the main building. The servant's bed-rooms are in the rear. The basement contains the pantry, larder and wine cellars, accessible only from the steward's offices. At the west end are steps from servant's entrance, coal-cellar, and stairs to kitchen. The building has been furnished by Messrs Wendover, of Hanover Street.



THE ROYAL NAVAL CLUB, PORTSMOUTH.

For those who did not attend our Annual General Meeting in April - and for those who did - Mrs Rosemary Sidwell, the wife of our President, has penned a delightful little piece to sum up the day. Both have been members of the RMHS for many years

The Royal Marines Historical Society

Annual General Meeting

Has anyone we know gone missing?
Perhaps we need to list the names.
Do we have a firm proposal
On how we should achieve our aims?

Do we have a sound opinion?
Are there any questions here?
If we had revised subscriptions
What would we achieve this year?

Can we have a form of vision?
But if we made a plan, what then,
Should we make a firm decision,
At our yearly A.G.M.?

Christmas cards (it's only April!)
Can we have a Stadden print,
Could we not refer to Council?
Better give the Corps a hint.

What about the Annual Dinner?
Should we let the C.G. in,
Can we have a champagne 'slinger'
When the 'Beat Retreats' begin?

What a lovely lunch we're having,
Afterwards a talk we'll hear,
Did you not enjoy the morning?
It's like this nearly every year.

Rosemary Sidwell