

# MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

Vol. XIX No. 76

May, 1969

## NOTES ON THE HISTORY AND BADGES OF THE ROYAL MARINES BANDS

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### EARLY HISTORY

Whereas the Lord Admiral's Regiment of 1664 (the forerunners of the present Corps) is known to have been complemented for six Drummers, which establishment had been increased to sixty by the year 1690, the earliest mention of a Marine Band which bore any resemblance to the present day units, i.e. a Band of Drums and Musical Instruments appears in 1693, when His Majesty's First Mareen Regiment is recorded as having a Drum and Fife Band.

A Warrant issued by His Majesty's Drum Major General in March of the same year indicates that the other Marine Regiments of the period also had, or aspired to have similar Bands. The Warrant states that Drummers, Hautboys and Fifers would be required, and if necessary impressed for service in the regiments by land and sea. This requirement varied considerably between 1693 and 1748, as during that period upwards of ten regiments of Marines were raised for sea service and then disbanded.

### THE DIVISIONAL BANDS

In the year 1755, fifty companies of Marines were permanently established and based in barracks at Plymouth, Portsmouth and Chatham when not serving afloat.

Pride of place as the oldest and senior Marine Band was that of the Band of Chatham Division, it having evolved from the Drum and Fife Band of the First Mareen Regiment of 1693.

The Plymouth Division Band was probably formed about 1767, although the first record of Music being taught to members of the Division is dated 1775. In that year the Officers of the Division hired one Antonio Rocco to "teach *musik*" at a salary of two and sixpence per week.

Portsmouth Division probably had a band at an even earlier date than 1767, but records of those early days are sparse, understandably so, when one takes into account the fact that the Bands were unofficial attachments, raised and financed by the Officers. It is therefore probable that those worthy gentlemen were not encouraged to overpublicise their Bands, which situation was not conducive to the maintenance of regular and accurate records.

The Bands obtained official recognition sometime between 1790 and 1801. An Admiralty directive of 1801 called for a report to explain why

the Band of the Plymouth Division was not wearing the regulation uniform, which indicates that Marine Bands were now required to conform with regulations issued some fifty years before. These regulations directed that every rank (including bandsmen) in every regiment were to wear a uniform with distinctions that would make them easy to identify. The position of the three Bands was further strengthened in 1802 when the fifty companies of Marines received regimental status and the title Royal Marines. The establishment of the Marine Bands was finally confirmed in an Admiralty Order of 1815 which laid the complement of each to be: One Sergeant, One Corporal, Twenty Drummers or Fifers.

A somewhat outdated complement when one considers the fact that many types of musical instruments were available at this time. Clarinets, Trumpets, Bugles, Trombones and various Percussion Instruments of Turkish origin had been available and used in Military Bands for many years. The Officers of the period were however as keen as their predecessors. They dug deep into their purses and provided additional instruments and personnel as required. The Royal Marine Band which accompanied the Sovereign on his cruise to Ireland on board H.M.S. *Active* in 1821 made such a favourable impression that it resulted in the Band of the Portsmouth Division being in constant demand for service on board the Royal Yacht, an attainment which must have required the efforts of a Band with a somewhat wider musical repertoire than could be provided by twenty drums or fifes. The Band of Chatham Division must also have been equally impressive when some five years later it was selected to attend upon the British Ambassador to Russia at the Coronation of Czar Nicholas 1. Its performances on that state occasion prompted the Emperor to present the Bandmaster (Mr. Rogers) with a ceremonial sword in recognition of his services.

#### BANDS OF THE ROYAL MARINE LIGHT INFANTRY AND ROYAL MARINE ARTILLERY

The Royal Marines were primarily designated as Infantrymen trained to fight on land or at sea. In 1804 Artillery companies were formed to assist in serving the guns at sea and to provide Artillery support for the Infantry companies when campaigning ashore. In 1855 the Royal Marine Infantrymen were given the new title of Royal Marine Light Infantry which distinction had little effect on their existing organization. This was followed in 1859 by the formation of the Royal Marine Artillery which consisted of the Artillery companies merged to form a distinct and separate unit from the R.M.L.I. The duties of both R.M.L.I. and R.M.A. remained basically unchanged, but both units wore different and distinctive uniforms and badges.

The Marine Divisional Bands now became the Bands of their respective R.M.L.I. Divisions with Depots at Plymouth, Portsmouth and Chatham as in the past. The R.M.A., however, passed away the first

fourteen years of its existence without an official Band until one was formed at Eastney in 1874. The period 1815-1874 had also seen the introduction of more sophisticated musical instruments, the increased versatility of musicians and a much improved standard of performance. The Bands were now firmly established and found themselves in great demand for public as well as Military functions.

#### DISTINCTIVE EMBLEMS. BANDS OF THE R.M.L.I. AND R.M.A.

Although the uniform of early Marine musicians was elaborate in the extreme, they appear to have conformed with regulations as far as Shako and Helmet plates are concerned. Military prints depict the plates to be identical to those worn by the parent regiment. In later years, however, the Marine Bands were awarded certain distinctive cyphers and devices for services to Royalty, the distinctions to be worn in addition to the regulation Helmet plate or the badge as laid down in the Dress Regulations. It is of interest to note that these distinctions are worn by musicians only, and not by the Drummers of the Band.

*Distinctive Band Devices were awarded to the Bands as follows :*

#### BAND OF THE R.M.L.I. PORTSMOUTH DIVISION

5th July, 1876. The Band to wear the Prince of Wales' Plume on their helmet plates and caps to commemorate their attendance upon His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) during his voyage to India in 1875/76.

#### BAND OF THE R.M.L.I. CHATHAM DIVISION.

By General Order Royal Marines 31/1902. The Band to wear the White Rose of York on their Helmet plates and caps to commemorate their attendance upon H.R.H. the Duke of Cornwall and York (later King George V) during his voyage to the Colonies on board the *Ophir* in 1901.

#### BAND OF THE R.M.A.

By General Order Royal Marines 44/1912. The Band to wear a distinctive cap badge to commemorate their attendance upon His Majesty King George V on his voyage to India and back in the *Medina*. The cap badge, consisting of a Gilt Grenade, on the ball of which is mounted the Royal cypher, GR.V. and Crown in silver, the whole surrounded by a gilt laurel wreath. The cypher GR.V. also to be worn on the helmet plate of all ranks over the Anchor and below the Globe.

#### BAND OF THE R.M.L.I. PLYMOUTH DIVISION

By General Order Royal Marines 206/1920. The Band to wear the Prince of Wales' Plumes on their helmet plates and caps to commemorate their attendance upon H.R.H. the Prince of Wales (the present Duke of Windsor) during his voyage to Canada, Australia, New Zealand and British possessions in the West Indies and Pacific on board H.M.S. *Renown*, 1919-1920. To differentiate between a similar honour awarded to the Band of the Portsmouth R.M.L.I. in 1876 which

was worn on the lower point of the helmet plate and over the anchor, the Plymouth Division wear the distinction at the division of the Crown and Brunswick Star.

NOTE 1

The Plumes awarded to the Band of the R.M.L.I. Portsmouth Division were worn by that Band until its dispersal in 1923 on the amalgamation of R.M.L.I. and R.M.A. As a large percentage of these musicians were transferred to the Depot Band at Deal, the Distinction continued to be worn by that Band until it too was dispersed in 1930.

NOTE 2

The York Rose awarded to the Band of the R.M.L.I. Chatham Division in 1902 continued to be worn by the Band of the Royal Marines Chatham Division after the amalgamation of 1923 and until that Band was disbanded in 1950.

NOTE 3

The distinctions awarded to the Band of the Royal Marine Artillery in 1912 were in 1923 transferred to the Band of the Royal Marines, Portsmouth Division as a result of the amalgamation. They are worn today by the Band of the Royal Marines Portsmouth Group.

NOTE 4

The Plumes awarded to the Band of the R.M.L.I. Plymouth Division in 1920 were in 1923 transferred to the Band of the Royal Marines Plymouth Division. They are worn today by the Plymouth Group Band.

THE AMALGAMATION OF 1923

The R.M.L.I. and R.M.A. were amalgamated to form one Corps of Royal Marines. This merger affected the four Bands as follows:

The Band of the R.M.L.I. Portsmouth Division was disbanded, its members being transferred to other Bands.

The Band of the R.M.L.I. Plymouth became the Band of the Royal Marines, Plymouth Division.

The Band of the R.M.L.I. Chatham became the Band of the Royal Marines, Chatham Division.

The Band of the Royal Marine Artillery became the Band of the Royal Marines Portsmouth Division and also the Royal Yacht Band (a title conferred on the Band of the R.M.A. by H.M. King Edward VII in 1903).

THE AMALGAMATION OF 1950

The Divisional Bands of the Royal Marines and the Bands of the Royal Naval School of Music were amalgamated. The Royal Naval School of Music was now called the Royal Marines School of Music. This merger affected the Bands as follows:

The R.M. Band of the Chatham Division was disbanded, its members being transferred to other Bands.

The R.M. Band of the Plymouth Division became the Band of the Royal Marines Plymouth Group.

The R.M. Band of the Portsmouth Division became the Band of the Royal Marines Portsmouth Group and the Royal Yacht Band.

#### NAVAL BANDSMEN

Not to be confused with the early Marine regimental bands are the bands which were found to be on several warships of the period. The size and quality of these bands depended to a great extent on the size of a Flag Officer or Captain's purse. The bands served to provide music for both ceremonial and festive occasions and although the music was generally appreciated, the presence of musicians on board did at times cause much discontent. This was due to the fact that some Captains embarked musicians in lieu of the authorised crew and paid them wages as such from the public funds. The musicians were also excused from all ship's duties which gave the already shorthanded crews cause for further grievance.

By the 1850s certain classes of warship were complemented for a band in addition to the normal crew, their uniform and pay being provided from official sources. Many of these bandsmen were foreigners, Maltese and Italians predominating. The Regulations for Naval Uniform of 1879 contains several plates illustrating their very un-nautical rig, the style of which earned them the nickname of "Hamoaze Hussars." Bandsmen wore blue tunics and trousers, the front of the tunic and cuffs decorated with white braid, and the outer seams of the trousers with two white braid stripes. A dark blue pill box type hat was worn which had a black braid band edged with white piping. The hat also had a white cord decoration in the centre of its crown. Chief Bandmasters and Bandmasters wore a similar rig which had silver braid, cord and piping. The rather colourful uniform was exchanged in the 1890s for a very sober fore and aft rig of blue cloth with an ugly little blue peak cap of the same colour. This remained the rig until Naval Bandsmen were affiliated to the Corps of Royal Marines some years later.

#### THE ROYAL NAVAL SCHOOL OF MUSIC

On the 25th May, 1903 all Naval Bandsmen were paid off to Eastney Barracks to join the newly formed Royal Naval School of Music. There they were re-categorised and detailed to undergo further training where necessary. With its members now known officially as Marine Bandsmen, the aim of the school was to train and provide bands for both the Navy and the Royal Marines ready for service on land or sea. Each band was to be capable of providing a full range of military, orchestral and dance music. New blood was to be enlisted through the Naval and Marine recruiting centres, and on joining the school would undergo military training in addition to musical instruction. To distinguish the R.N.S.M. musicians from their counterparts in the R.M.L.I. and R.M.A. bands, distinctive cap and collar badges were introduced for the rank and file. A Band from the R.N.S.M. accompanied the late

King George V and Queen Mary, when as Prince and Princess of Wales, they toured India and Burma, voyaging aboard H.M.S. *Renown* in 1905/6. This was the first of many services to Royalty that the School's bands were to provide. In 1930 the school was transferred to Deal in Kent. This was to be its permanent home except during the war years. In May, 1940, the boys of the school were evacuated to Exton Camp at Lymington, Devon, at that time the Royal Marine Reserve Depot. The senior members of the school were drafted to Plymouth, and in September, 1940 the whole school reassembled as one unit in a camp at Malvern. In the early summer of 1941, the Admiralty decided that they needed the camp for a Naval Shore Establishment, so in July 1941, the boys of the school were sent to the Isle of Man until 1946. The R.N.S.M. Junior Wing was set up in a holiday camp at Howstrake, near Douglas, the senior branch of the school moving to Scarborough, where they were accommodated in two hotels, the Norbreck and the Grand. In 1946, both wings joined together again at a former American Army Camp at Burford. In January 1950 the school returned to Deal.

The Bandsmen of the Royal Naval School of Music played a gallant part in two world wars, manning positions in the Gunnery and Fire Control systems of warships in every major naval action. Two hundred and twenty-five musicians gave their lives in the Second World War. Their names and the ships in which they served are perpetuated in the Book of Remembrance and the fourteen Memorial Trumpets held at the Deal Depot.

#### THE ROYAL MARINES SCHOOL OF MUSIC

In 1950 the Royal Naval School of Music and Group (ex-Divisional) Bands amalgamated to form the Royal Marines School of Music. From that date, musicians of both Group and School of Music Bands came under common terms of service and training. Exceptions were made in the case of the longer serving members of the Group Bands which enabled them to complete their engagements under the original terms of enlistment. An important clause in their terms of enlistment was that they did not contract to serve afloat except on special occasions. This re-organisation saw the dispersal of the Chatham Division Band, a sad but necessary cut which no doubt satisfied economic requirements. Overall organisation was much streamlined which assisted in improving training and drafting facilities within the Band Service.

#### BADGES AND HELMET PLATES OF THE R.M.A. BAND 1874-1923

**CAP BADGE 1912.**—A Brass Grenade, viz., the cap badge of the R.M.A. Plate C(1). Bandsmen embarked on board the Royal Yacht may have worn the letters RY in Silver Plate above the Grenade.

**CAP BADGE 1912-23.**—A Gilt Grenade, on the ball of which is mounted the Royal Cypher GVR and Crown in Silver Plate. The whole surrounded by a wreath of Laurel. Plate B(8).

**HELMET PLATE 1874-1905.**—The Brass Helmet Plate of the R.M.A. as in

Plate C(2). Senior N.C.Os.' Gilt Plate as in C(3).

**HELMET PLATE 1905-12.**—The Brunswick Star and Crown introduced in 1905. Plate C(4). Bugle and Drum Majors wore a Gilt Plate.

**HELMET PLATE 1912-23.**—The Brunswick Star and Crown in Brass with the Royal Cypher GVR in Silver Plate superimposed above the Anchor and below the Globe. Bugle and Drum Majors wore a Gilt Plate. Plate A(7).

**BANDMASTERS BUSBY BADGE 1874-78.**—Plate D.



### BADGES AND PLATES OF THE R.M.L.I. DIVISIONAL BANDS 1876-1923

**SHAKO PLATE 1876-78 AS WORN BY THE DIVISIONAL BANDS.**—The 1876-78 Shako Plate of the R.M.L.I. as in Plate C(7). Brass. The Portsmouth Division Band probably wore the Prince of Wales' Plumes, Coronet and Motto in Silver Plate superimposed above the lower point of the Star.

**R.M.L.I. GLENGARRY 1880-90 AS WORN BY THE DIVISIONAL BANDS.**—A three piece badge consisting of a Globe, Wreath of Laurels and Bugle Horn in brass. Plate C(6). Senior N.C.Os.' Gilt.

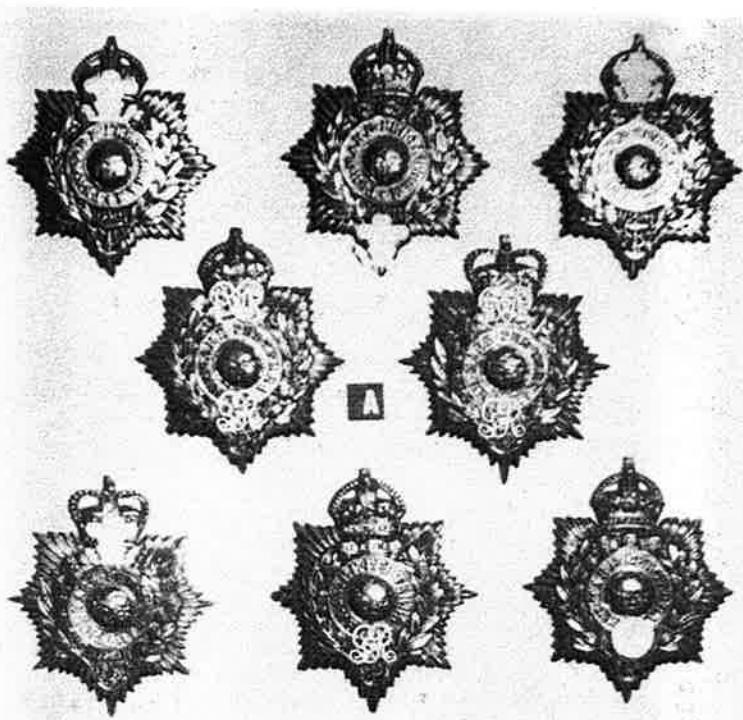
The Portsmouth Division Band probably wore the Prince of Wales' Plumes, Coronet and Motto in Silver Plate between the Globe and Laurels and Bugle Horn.

**PORTRSMOUTH DIVISION BAND CAP BADGE 1890-1923.**—The Cap Badge of the R.M.L.I. in Brass (Gilt for Senior N.C.Os.) with the Prince of Wales' Plumes, Coronet and Motto in Silver Plate worn above. Plate B(6).

**PORTRSMOUTH DIVISION BAND HELMET PLATE 1878-1905.**—The 1878-1902 Pattern Helmet Plate of the R.M.L.I. in Brass (Gilt for Senior N.C.Os.) as in Plate C(5) with the Prince of Wales' Plumes, Coronet and Motto in Silver Plate superimposed between Anchor and Bugle on the Lower point of the Star.

Although a different pattern helmet plate with King's crown was issued for use by the R.M.L.I. during the period 1902-05 the author can find no record of it ever having been issued to the Portsmouth Band and worn with Plumes fitted as above.

**PORTRSMOUTH DIVISION BAND HELMET PLATE 1905-23.**—The Brunswick Star Pattern Helmet Plate and Crown introduced in 1905 in Brass (Gilt for Senior N.C.Os.) with Prince of Wales' Plumes, Coronet and



Motto in Silver Plate superimposed over the Anchor on the lower point of the Star. Plate A(2).

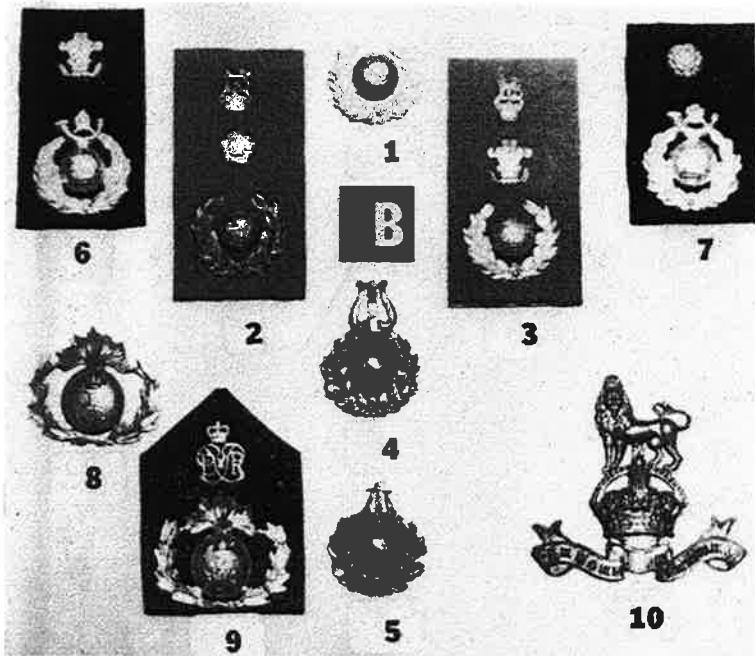
N.B. The band of the R.M.L.I. Portsmouth Division was dispersed in 1923, its members being allocated to other bands, in the main, the band of the Depot at Deal. The Portsmouth Plumes were worn by the Staff Band of the Deal Depot in the position shown in Plate A(3) (i.e. Overlapping the Crown) until that unit was disbanded in 1930.

#### BADGES AND HELMET PLATES OF THE R.M.L.I. DIVISIONAL BANDS 1876-1923

**CHATHAM DIVISION CAP BADGE 1890-1902 AND PLYMOUTH DIVISION CAP BADGE 1890-1920.**—The Cap Badge of the R.M.L.I. in Brass (Gilt for Senior N.C.Os.). Plate C(8).

**CHATHAM DIVISION CAP BADGE 1902-23.**—The Cap Badge of the R.M.L.I. in Brass (Gilt for Senior N.C.Os.) with the York Rose in Silver Plate worn above. Plate B(7).

**CHATHAM DIVISION HELMET PLATE 1905-23.**—The Brunswick Star and Crown introduced in 1905 in Brass (Gilt for Senior N.C.Os.) with the York Rose in Silver Plate superimposed on the plate below the Globe and above the Anchor. Plate A(8).



The author can find no record of the York Rose being worn by the Chatham Band on any earlier Pattern Helmet Plate.

**PLYMOUTH DIVISION CAP BADGE 1920-23.**—As for the Portsmouth Division of the same period. Plate B(6).

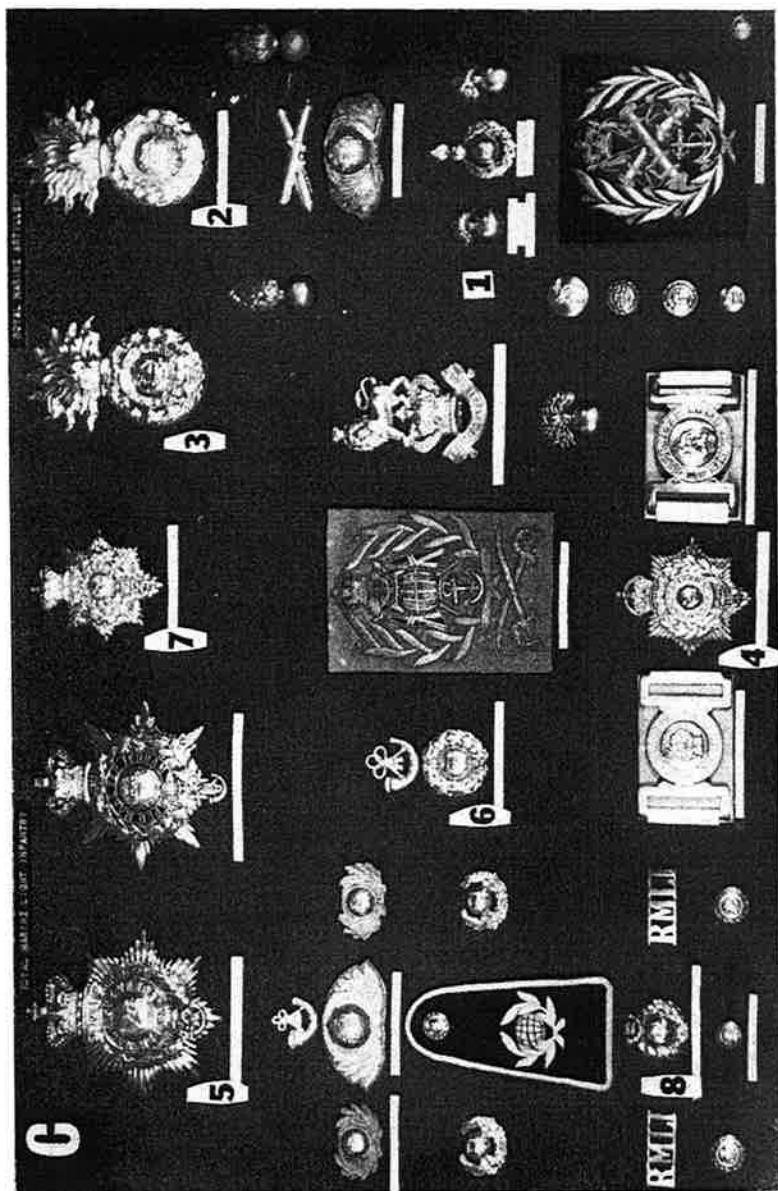
**PLYMOUTH DIVISION HELMET PLATE 1920-23.**—The Brunswick Star and Crown in Brass (Gilt for Senior N.C.Os.) with the Prince of Wales' Plumes, Coronet and Motto in Silver Plate superimposed at the division of Crown and Star. Plate A(1).

#### BADGES AND HELMET PLATES OF THE ROYAL MARINE DIVISIONAL BANDS 1923-1947

**PORTRSMOUTH DIVISION BAND 1923-47.**—The Helmet Plate and Cap Badge are as those of the Band of the R.M.A. 1912-23. Plate A(7) and Plate B(8).

**PLYMOUTH DIVISION BAND 1923-47.**—Helmet Plate: As for the R.M.L.I. Band 1920-23. Plate A(1). Cap Badge: A three part badge consisting of the Globe and Laurel, the Prince of Wales' Plumes, Coronet and Motto in Silver Plate, the King's Crown and Lion. The Globe and Laurel, Lion and Crown in Brass (Gilt for Senior N.C.Os.). As in Plate B(3) but with King's Crown.

**CHATHAM DIVISIONAL BAND 1923-50.**—Helmet Plate: As for the R.M.L.I. Band 1905-23. Plate A(8). Cap Badge: A three part badge consisting of the Globe and Laurel, the York Rose in Silver Plate, the King's



Crown and Lion. The Globe and Laurel, Lion and Crown in Brass. (Gilt for Senior N.C.Os.). Plate B(2).

**N.B.** The band of the Portsmouth Division was authorized to wear the Royal Yacht shoulder flash in 1926.

### **BADGES AND HELMET PLATES OF THE GROUP BANDS, ROYAL MARINES FROM 1947**

The Chatham Band was disbanded in 1950.

**BAND OF THE PLYMOUTH GROUP.**—The Helmet Plate remained unchanged until very recently when Helmet Plates with the Queen's Crown superseded those with the King's Crown. Position of the Plumes remains unchanged. See Plate A(6).

The design of the three piece cap badge is much the same except for the change in crowns. The Queen's crown was introduced in 1952. See Plate B(3).

**BAND OF THE PORTSMOUTH GROUP 1947-55.**—The Helmet Plate and Cap Badge remained unchanged. **From 1955 R.M.R.O. 369/55 Refers.** To commemorate the attendance of the Band on Her Majesty the Queen during her Commonwealth Tour of 1953-54. The Band to wear the combined cyphers of Her Majesty and H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh on their Helmet Plates and Caps. The new distinction to be worn as follows:

**Caps.** The combined cyphers surmounted by the Queen's Crown in Silver Plate to be worn above the existing cap badge as in Plate B(9).

**Helmet Plate.** The combined cyphers in Silver Plate to be worn on the Helmet Plate at the division of Crown and Star as in Plate (A4).

**N.B.** a. Helmet Plate with the Queen's Crown have very recently superseded those with King's Crown. See Plate (A5).

b. The Royal Yacht Flash was transferred from the Portsmouth Division Band to the Portsmouth Group Band.

c. The Band Pouch Badge Plate B(10) has not yet been replaced by a pattern which incorporates the Queen's Crown.

### **HELMET PLATES AND CAP BADGES OF THE R.N. SCHOOL OF MUSIC 1903-1950**

**CAP BADGE, JUNIOR N.C.Os. AND MUSICIANS 1903-20.**—The Globe and Laurel in Brass. Plate B(1).

**CAP BADGE, SENIOR N.C.Os. 1903-20.**—A two part cap badge in Gilt consisting of the Globe and Laurel with a Lyre of the type depicted in Plate B(4) worn separately above.

**CAP BADGE, SENIOR N.C.Os. 1920-1950.**—Globe, Laurels and Lyre in Gilt as in Plate B(4).

**CAP BADGE, R.N.S.M. 1920-50.**—Globe, Laurels and small Lyre as in Plate B(5). There exist one or two variations in the design of the Lyre.

**HELMET PLATE 1920-50.**—The Brunswick Star and Crown of the Corps of Royal Marines, Plate C(4), in Brass. Senior N.C.Os. in Gilt.

Some of the dates quoted may not be strictly accurate; they are, however, the best that could be extracted from material available at the time of writing. If any member has additional, or more accurate information on the subject, details of same would be welcomed and much appreciated.