This timely and most readable account of the Royal Naval Division in World War One follows Alex Manning's excellent lecture on the subject at the last AGM of the RMHS. Alex was a formerly an RN Instructor Officer in 41 Commando RM and Corps Tutor.

Jack and Royal in the Trenches
(The Royal Naval Division, 1914-1919)

By Lieutenant Commander Alex Manning RN

The First World War was the biggest war this country was ever involved in up to that time and one that, for the first time, involved the whole country and not just its armed forces. A total of 8.3 million were mobilised for the Fighting services and their support, of which ¾ of a million were killed some 700,000 land. Of the total killed, only some 4%, just over 32,000, were Royal Navy and Royal Marines - but over 11,000 of that 32,000 were deaths actually incurred on land, by the Royal Naval Division; and while 32,000 might only (only!) be 4.4% of the total overall it represents at the same time getting on for some **40%** of the Naval Service's killed in the whole war. For a number of reasons the contribution of the Royal Naval Division in WW1 is relatively unknown, to the extent that few people today even know it existed. So what was the Royal Naval Division? Where did it come from, what did it consist of and what did it do?

Its foundations were actually laid well before the First World War began, when plans were made to create a mobile force to seize, fortify and protect temporary forward naval bases wherever they might be required. This force, to be called "The Advanced Base Force" was originally to be composed solely of Royal Marines. On the outbreak of war in August 1914 it was duly formed and placed under Admiralty control.

On mobilisation however, the popularity of the Navy and the strength of its reserves resulted in a surplus of manpower well above that required to man the Fleet. It was therefore decided by the

First Lord of the Admiralty (the Minister for the Navy), Winston Churchill, to use that surplus to expand the Advanced Base Force with 2 brigades of the recalled reservists. Not one to waste time, he duly sent a memo on the 16th of August to the Secretary of the Admiralty and the 1st and 2nd Sea Lords, giving them just a week to make it start happening! This directive was not welcomed by everyone at the Admiralty, however. Captain Herbert Richmond, for example, the able and highly regarded Assistant Director of Operations at the Admiralty, wrote in his diary of 20th August that *"the whole thing is so wicked that Churchill ought to be hanged before he should be allowed to do such a thing!"*

By the end of the month, however, a tented camp for the 1st Naval Brigade had been established on Walmer Downs, near Dover, followed by another one in early September at nearby Betteshanger for the 2nd Brigade, accommodating between them over 7000 men in all - 3,528 officers, petty officers and men of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve and 3,500 selected ex-regular ratings of the Royal Fleet Reserve, including some 2,000 stokers, further increased by additionally recalled retired officers and men. One can only imagine the reaction of some of these men on being detailed off to draw webbing and rifles instead of hammocks and sea-going kit! As it was, khaki was in short supply, so the majority wore normal naval blue uniform to begin with and had to make do with outdated Lee-Metford rifles instead of the modern Lee-Enfields of the army and marines.

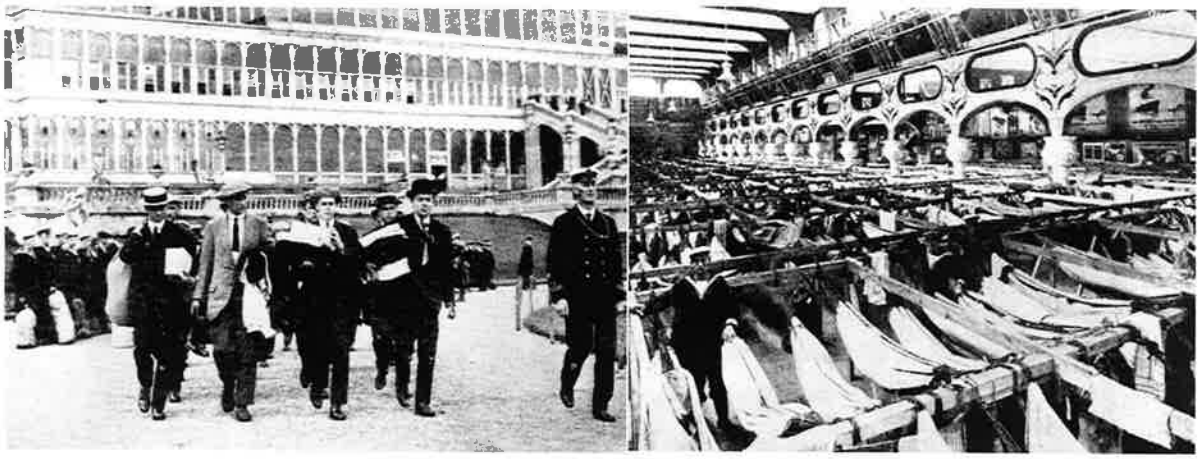
Their senior officers were selected from serving members of the Royal Navy, the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, the Royal Marines and, for additional military expertise, recently retired officers from the Brigade of Guards. To emphasise the Force's naval character and traditions, naval ranks, rates and customs were maintained and the naval battalions were named after famous admirals. Thus, by early September 1914 the Order of Battle of what was now titled "The Royal Naval Division" was as follows:

1st RN Brigade:
- 1st (Drake) Battalion
- 2nd (Hawke) Battalion
- 3rd (Benbow) Battalion
- 4th (Collingwood) Battalion

2nd RN Brigade:
- 5th (Nelson) Battalion
- 6th (Howe) Battalion
- 7th (Hood) Battalion
- 8th (Anson) Battalion

3rd RN Brigade (RM):
- 9th (Portsmouth) Battalion RMLI
- 10th (Plymouth) Battalion RMLI
- 11th (Chatham) Battalion RMLI
- 12th (Deal) Battalion RMLI

Each battalion had a RN commander or RM lieutenant colonel as its CO and a lieutenant-commander or RM major as its 2i/c. As the training got under way however, it was quickly realised that the new battalions had more than enough on their hands just teaching basic infantry skills without having to handle raw recruit training as well; so, in mid-September a divisional depot was established at the old Crystal Palace at Sydenham in south-east London to process the new recruits and provide 5 weeks' basic training prior to their being drafted to specific battalions. And within a short space of time the glass interior and highly decorated rooms of the Palace became a place for hammocks and instruction rooms. It was only a matter of weeks, however, before this still ad-hoc and working-up Royal Naval Division was sent into action.



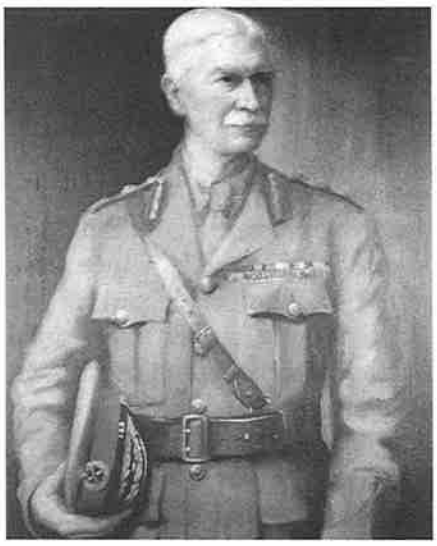
At the beginning of October, as the situation on the continent became more desperate, and despite their still being only partly trained in basic soldiering skills by this stage, the 1st and 2nd Naval Brigades, less only their new recruits, were sent across to Belgium to join the Royal Marine Brigade already over there. That had been deployed to Ostend at the end of August and then sent on to assist with the defence of Antwerp, where it was joined in the early hours of the 6th of October by the 2 naval brigades. Churchill's decision to deploy the Division, and especially the marines in this way, was again heavily criticised by many at the Admiralty. Captain Richmond this time wrote: *"The First Lord is sending his army there. I don't mind his tuppenny untrained rabble going but I do strongly object to 2000 invaluable Royal Marines being sent to be locked up in a fortress and becoming prisoners of war if the place is taken."* Events were, sadly, to fully justify this criticism.

The marines and part-trained sailors did help hold off the advancing Germans until the 8th of October, but as a result of confused orders for, and during, their withdrawal over 2400 men from the Hawke, Collingwood and Benbow Battalion were then lost after being outflanked and cut off. 936 were taken prisoner and while another 1479 managed to get across the border into neutral Holland, they were then interned there for the rest of the war. In view of what was to come later, this might, with hindsight, be considered a fortunate outcome for them.

There were understandable grievances among the "tuppenny untrained rabble" after it got back to Britain, especially among the stokers, but in the month after Antwerp the situation was firmly gripped and confidence restored as the Royal Naval Division, until then really only a division in name, was turned into the properly structured, staffed and equipped mobile fighting formation it was meant to be. It would continue to be commanded by the well-respected and popular Royal Marines Major General Archibald Paris, who had commanded the RM Brigade as a colonel and

then been promoted to command the whole division in Belgium after its original commander was taken ill and invalided home.

None of the blame for Antwerp was ever laid at his door and he was seen by the men themselves as having done the best he could with what he had, or didn't have, in an isolated and constantly-changing situation. The continuation in command of General Paris and his very positive example and ethos soon worked its way down and through the whole rebuilding Division.



The 2 naval brigades were moved out of their tents and the mud of the camps in Kent and dispersed to barracks and billets while an entirely new camp was purpose-built for the whole division at Blandford in Dorset (still there today, now the Headquarter and Depot of the Royal Corps of Signals). The Nelson Battalion moved in at the end of November and the rest of the Division followed in stages until the arrival of the Royal Marine Brigade at the end of January completed the re-establishment, all bar the Hawke, Benbow and Collingwood Battalions still being rebuilt at the Crystal Palace after Antwerp (and, for the time being, one field company of divisional engineers). Blandford now became the divisional depot, including for the Royal Marine Brigade, and the base for 7 weeks' advanced training, while the Crystal Palace continued to be responsible, as it had been previously, for the recruiting and basic training of the men for the naval brigades, the Royal Marines being trained separately in their own depots.

Also, by the nature of its very difference, the Royal Naval Division had enjoyed from the outset something of a cachet as a "fashionable" unit, attracting many well-connected people on its formation and, despite the setback at Antwerp, continuing to do so, both from at home and from the wider Empire; the poet Rupert Brooke, for example *("If I should die think only this of me that there is some corner of a foreign field that is forever England.....etc.")*, Vere Harmsworth, son of the press baron Lord Northcliffe,, Compton Mackenzie, Arthur Asquith, a son of the then Prime Minister, the future novelist and MP A P Herbert, more than one serving MP and many others.

And the sailors themselves, being nothing if not adaptable, soon realised they were indeed part of something very different from the rest of the Navy and special, and began to make the most of it. Although entirely separate from the army too, the RND, in recruiting, training and keeping its people entirely to itself as it did, was in effect one big regiment in its own right, with its men fast realising and appreciating the benefits of that.

The mix of pre-Antwerp blue uniforms and non-standard kit was replaced by early December by uniform khaki and standard in-service equipment. The round sailor's hat was retained in a khaki version though, with either the words "Royal Naval Division" or the name of the man's battalion in gold lettering on its cap tally, enabling him to not only identify with what he belonged to but also display it to everyone else. In a very simple way this reinforced the already fast-growing sense of identity and helped create an esprit de corps that was to fast become the Division's own. And among the officers of the Division there emerged a growing respect for those originally reluctant stoker-soldiers in particular.

Douglas Jerrold, the historian of the RND, wrote in 1928: *"The stokers of the Royal Naval Division were the backbone of the battalions. Never smart men, they were to show great patience, endurance and fighting quality, which showed their depth of disciple and training. They knew the regulations and the suitable penalty. Newly-joined officers had to prove themselves to these men and many can recall the experience of trying to exercise authority over the stokers with amusement but not much pride."*

Lieutenant Patrick Shaw-Stewart wrote of them: *"I have the queerest command - imagine it, a platoon of old stokers! They are a queer fish to handle after the lamb-like Scots at the Crystal Palace. Their appearance is rather like the Punch picture of Landstrum, their language extremely fruity and their cunning inexhaustible. But they have great character and I dare say they may grow on me. But they have got some sort of standing grievance in the back of their evil old minds that they want to be back in their steel-walled pens yelping delight and rolling in the waist instead of forming fours under the orders of an insolent young landlubber."* Writing to Violet Asquith, the Prime Minister's daughter, he also said: *"Never say we're not an hilarious nation. Christmas Day in the*

than 13,000 of its original 16,500 were casualties to both battle and disease; the battle casualties were 2,500 killed and over 7,000 wounded.

After Gallipoli there were calls for the Division to be disbanded and its men transferred to the Army and it took a great deal of lobbying by many influential people to allow it to remain in existence, people like Sir Edward Carson, the eminent politician and lawyer who had replaced Churchill as the 1st Lord of the Admiralty, Churchill himself, the Asquith family, Hankey (Secretary to the War Cabinet) and the Naval Staff itself, now understandably proud of the RND's achievements. For operational purposes, however, the Division was to be assigned to the British Expeditionary Force in France, now coming under the Army Act but remaining an entirely separate organisation for recruiting, training, pay and promotions, its RN and RM elements continuing to be paid for by the Admiralty (which also paid better!).

Still in the Mediterranean at the time, the 1st Brigade at Salonika and the 2nd on island garrison duty in the Aegean, the Division arrived at Marseilles in mid-May. Making its way north by train, it was met at the stations by cheering crowds pressing food and wine on the very grateful seamen and marines. It then marched the last stage to a concentration area at Longpre, near Abbeville, where it began to reorganise and prepare for operations on the Western Front.

Almost straight away it went to war, not yet with the Germans but with its new foster parent, the Army! While the RND was regarded in some quarters with interest as something of a curiosity and its addition to BEF's Order of Battle generally welcomed, there was also a strong faction positively hostile to this "iffy hybrid" and its naval ways that was having none of it. Having previously tried, and failed, to disband it or have it transferred completely to the Army (moves defeated by the Admiralty's threat to withdraw all the naval and RM personnel belonging to it) they now tried to make it conform to the standard Army divisional model in the name of uniformity and efficiency, removing that which made it un-necessarily different and, in their view, too much of a law unto itself. Its members were not "proper" soldiers, they held, and by 1916 not even real sailors either, so the RND, by definition, <u>had</u> to be inferior to an army division, didn't it? - they didn't even salute the "right" way, for goodness sake! But the Division itself was having none of it. General Paris (now **Sir** Archibald Paris, knighted after Gallipoli) was still in command and he did everything he could to ensure the RND's unique identity and character continued.

The white ensign was flown and displayed wherever possible and naval language called into play as a matter of course! The cookhouse was the "galley", leaving billets and base "going ashore" and coming back late "being adrift". Floors and the ground itself was "the deck", ceilings "deckheads", walls "bulkheads", windows "scuttles" and toilets "the heads". In the naval battalions the Officers' Mess was the Wardroom, messages and announcements were "pipes" and the passage of time and changes of watch were marked by "bells" (11.00 hrs., for example, being 6 bells in the Forenoon Watch) - and of course "up spirits", the daily mid-day naval rum tot, was sacrosanct, regardless of whether they were forward in the Line or not!

The only concessions made were purely practical ones, such as resolving the problem of rank recognition and equivalence. The officers of the RND had worn equivalent army rank on their shoulders in addition to the naval rank on their cuffs more or less from the start in 1914, and the ratings too now wore dual rank - their naval rank on their left sleeves as normal and its army equivalent on the right - a leading hand, for example, wore a corporal's 2 stripes and a petty officer a sergeant's 3 - but the naval Good Conduct badges, which are identical to NCO's stripes, definitely confused matters! Senior Chief Petty Officers took on the roles of company sergeants major, wearing a crown on the right cuff in the manner of an army Warrant Officer Class 2, for which there was no equivalent in the Navy of that time.

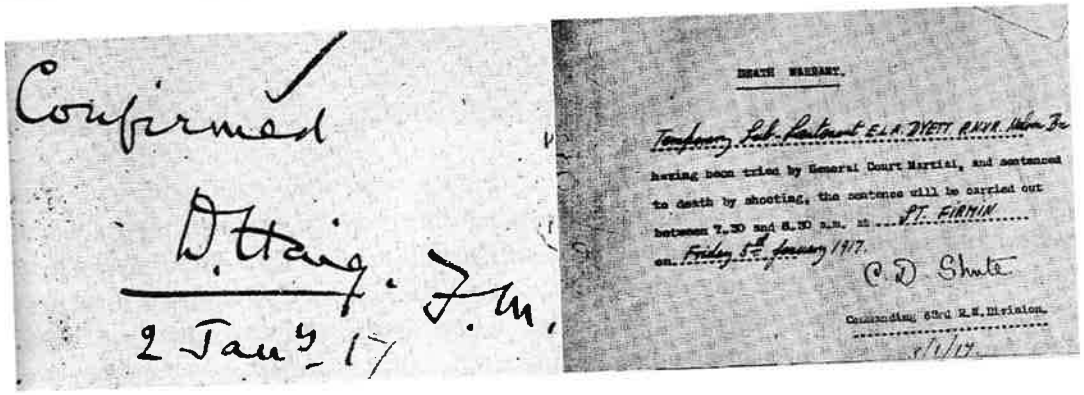
With the War Office having taken over responsibility for equipment, the much-cherished sailor's round cap was also replaced by the army-pattern peaked cap. Senior ratings already wore peaked caps anyway, with distinctive cap badges to further indicate their rank, and the Royal Marines wore badged peaked caps too, so a set of metal badges for the naval junior rates' caps was swiftly produced, each battalion's being different, along with shoulder titles. Another advantage of the Army providing the kit was that the Division now all got Lee-Enfield rifles and Lewis guns.

Compared to a 3-Brigade army division, however, the RND was under-manned and needed to be brought up to strength. The original plan was to create the required 3rd brigade *en famille*, with the required extra battalions raised in-house via the Crystal Palace and Blandford but both were at full stretch just providing replacements for the existing battalions and simply couldn't do it. It was therefore agreed that the additional 3rd brigade would come from the Army - and to facilitate its integration it was also agreed that the Division's 2 existing brigades would be renumbered in army terms. They therefore became the 188th and 189th Brigades and the 3rd brigade, comprising the 1st Battalion Honourable Artillery Company (serving as infantry), 4th Bedfords, 7th Royal Fusiliers and 10th Dublin Fusiliers, would be the 190th, commanded by an RM officer and RND staff to help its own integration. This brigade, with, additionally, a machine-gun company per brigade, trench

perhaps an indication of a resigned fatalism induced by his state of mind. His highly nervous state and his unsuitability for soldiering (what would almost certainly be identified today as post-traumatic stress disorder) were indeed acknowledged at his trial but, despite this, on the evidence presented a "guilty" verdict was returned.

However, the members of the court-martial panel, all battle-experienced officers, recommended mercy, and on 2 specific grounds; firstly Dyett's youth and inexperience and secondly - and more interestingly - that the prevailing conditions on the battlefield that day had tested all but the strongest of young men. Even General Shute recommended the sentence be commuted, but to no avail. Fanshawe, the V Corps Commander, and Gough, the 5th Army Commander, both maintained it should stand and Sub Lt Dyett was duly shot at dawn on 5 January 1917 by a firing party drawn, as was the custom, from his own battalion. His last words were: "Well, boys, goodbye. For God's sake, shoot straight".

A further aspect of the Dyett case is that, under naval law, a sentence of death could not be carried out without final sanction by the Admiralty Board. While there is no doubt that Dyett was also subject to the Army Act, there is no reason to believe, and no evidence whatsoever exists, that any consideration was given at the time to his naval status and its relevance in the context of confirmation of the sentence. Nor, indeed, that it was even realised, let alone raised. There is little doubt that the consent of the Admiralty Board was never sought, far less obtained; nor, I believe, would it have been given if it had been. Sub Lt Edwin Dyett may not only have been shot unjustly, therefore, but also illegally.


Confirmed
D. Haig. F.M.
2 Jan 17

DEATH WARRANT.

Temporary Sub-Lieutenant E.L.A. DYETT, R.N.V.R. Howe Bn

having been tried by General Court Martial, and sentenced to death by shooting, the sentence will be carried out between 7.30 and 8.30 a.m. at PT. FIRMIN on Friday 5th January 1917.

C.D. Shute

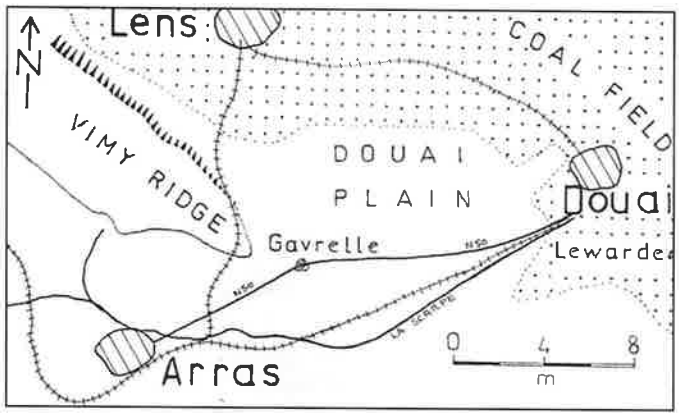
Commanding 63rd R.N. Division.

4/1/17.

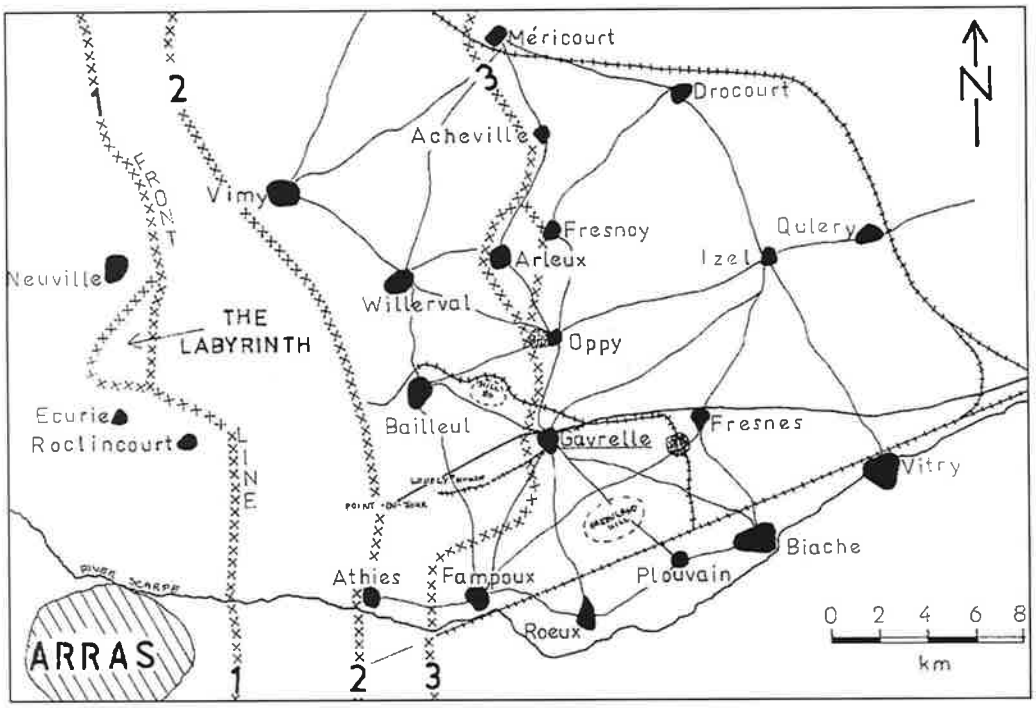
Things had to move on however, and at the beginning of February and in severe conditions that froze water bottles and would make resupply and casualty evacuation difficult, the Division was tasked with pushing further up the Ancre valley and taking the next 2 lines of German trenches on the ridge commanding Grandcourt. The plan was for a fast 8-minute trench-to-trench assault but the objectives were only taken after 50 hours of bitter fighting and another 650 casualties. That hard-won success was further exploited on 17-18 February with an attack in force towards Miraumont and although casualties were again heavy and on a par with the earlier action it was a decisive result that led to the Germans evacuating not only their positions there but also others nearby. Miraumont itself was duly occupied on the 25th without a shot being fired. After this action the Division was finally relieved from further duty on the Ancre/Somme front and rested.

On the strength of its excellent performance on the Somme, the Division was then assigned a vital role in the forthcoming Battle of Arras to the north, the aim of which was to take the high ground of Vimy Ridge and the 3 lines of German defences running from it across the Douai Plain. The battle began on the 9th April, Easter Monday, and with the 1st 2 lines taken by the 14th the next stage was to take the 3rd.

The RND's specific task was to take the heavily fortified village of Gavrelle, 8 miles NE of Arras, a key part of that 3rd line, and in a fast-moving assault that began before dawn on 23rd April the trenches immediately in front of the village were quickly taken, followed by the village itself in an intense house-to-house battle that secured the immediate area to the east, north and south. This success was largely due to the outstanding leadership of 2 battalion commanders: Asquith, now commanding Hood, and Sterndale-Bennett of Drake (at 23 the youngest battalion commander on the Western Front).

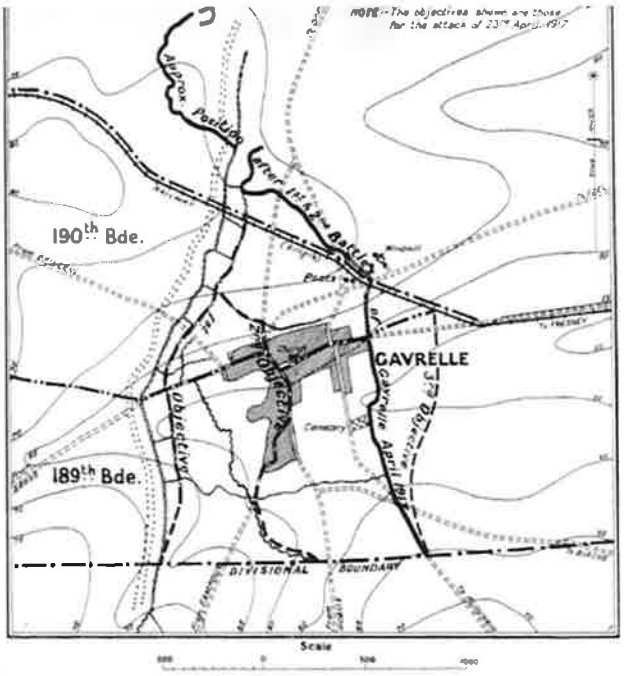


Both Asquith and Sterndale-Bennettt were recommended for the VC but were awarded DSOs - this has always been thought to have had a political dimension; Asquith, as a son of the now-former Prime Minister, could not be suspected of having been "favoured" and, if he couldn't have a VC, nor could Sterndale-Bennett for his equal acts of bravery. Later in the week however, 2 members of the HAC Bn, Lts Pollard and Haine, did win VCs during further intense fighting as the Division first beat off the expected counter-attacks, consolidated its gains and then applied itself to the German trenches and strongpoints to the east and north some 3 to 400 yards beyond the village. At the end of the fighting German casualties were very high but the price paid by the Division for its success and further enhanced reputation was also, again, very high - by the time it was relieved on the night of 29th April it had lost over 1000 more killed and near 3000 wounded.



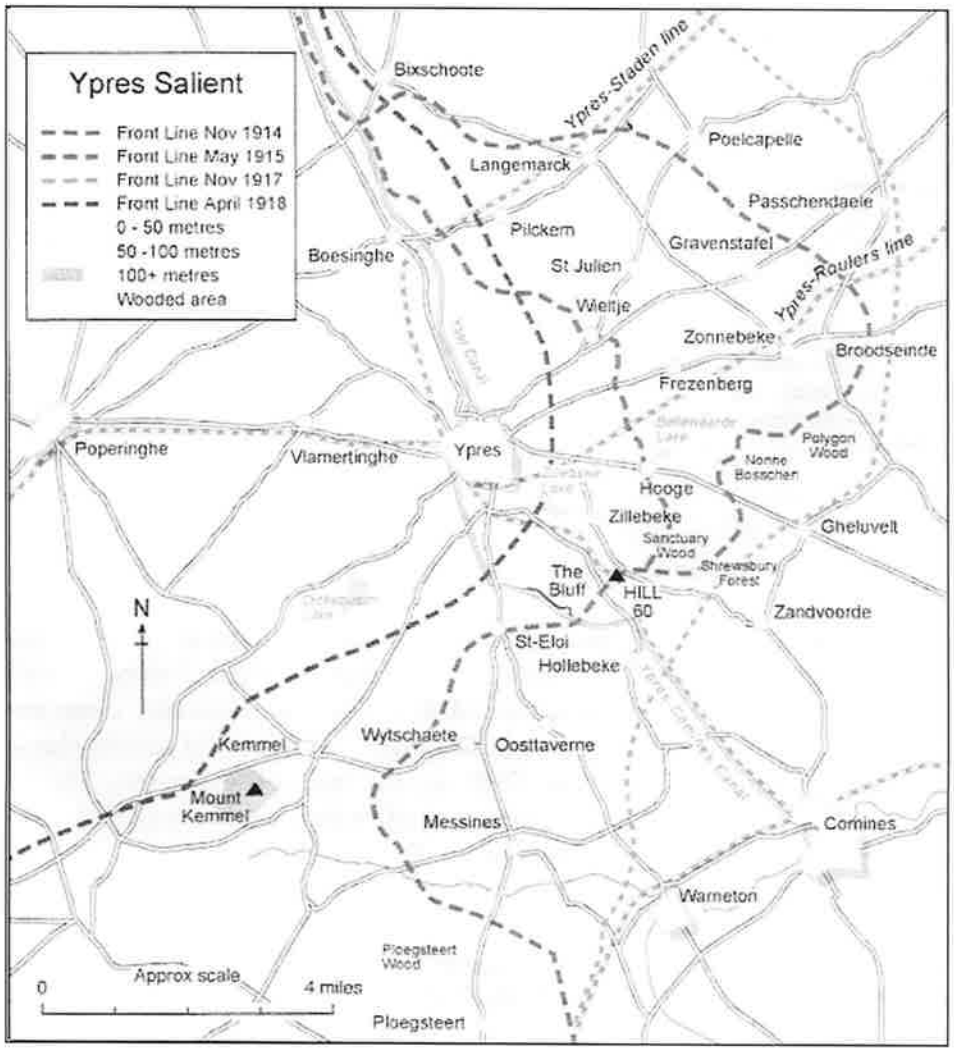
Gavrelle, specifically, saw the highest number of Royal Marine casualties in a single day in the history of the Corps - 846 killed, missing or wounded on 28th April. The 1st RM Battalion itself was effectively wiped out during the attacks of that day when it charged a German strongpoint north of the village, found the barbed wire still intact and was enfiladed into the bargain; the 2nd Battalion, too, suffered just as badly, especially in the fighting around the windmill that formed part of the German line north-east of the +village and was a particularly important position that changed hands several times. Among the 1st Battalion's casualties that day was Lieutenant Edgar Platts, believed at age 17 to have been the youngest officer killed in the 1st World War (he had lied about his age when he joined up, aged just 15, in 1915). 3 MCs, 2 DCMs and 29 MMs were awarded to Royal Marines alone for their actions at Gavrelle - and yet few of today's Royal Marines, like many in today's parent Naval Service seeming to know little or nothing about the Royal Naval Division as a whole, seem to have even heard of Gavrelle.

Gavrelle 1917 2nd Bn RMLI in fierce fighting at the windmill position



At the end of June the HAC and 10th Dublins were replaced by the 5th King's Shropshire Light Infantry and the 1/28th London Regiment (The Artists' Rifles) in 190 Brigade and after working up these 2 new battalions the Division went north to the Ypres Salient, to be available in October and November for the last stages of the 3rd Battle of Ypres, the Battle of Passchendaele, whose object was to break out to the Passchendaele Ridge and the open country beyond. The RND joined the line near Poelkapelle at the end of October, alongside the Canadians and WNW of Passchendaele village itself, where it found the continuous shelling of the months before had totally destroyed the land's drainage system and the continuous heavy rain had turned it into a featureless desert of water and mud. It was across this quagmire that the Division was tasked with assaulting and capturing concrete-reinforced strongpoints and farm buildings and such success as there was was only achieved, once again, by almost superhuman efforts by the men and inspiring leadership by the officers. More than 1,000 more RND men died and another 2,000 were wounded. Although the Passchendaele Ridge itself was finally taken the offensive got no further. The butcher's bill for the Battle of Passchendaele overall was 350,000 casualties - 35 men killed or wounded for every yard of ground gained.

To rest, the RND was sent to Welsh Ridge, a projection into the Hindenburg Line captured in the earlier Battle of Cambrai. Unfortunately, the Germans attacked there in strength at the end of the year and it took a major counter-attack by the Division to evict them, costing another 1,400 killed and wounded. At the end of January 1918, as aresult of the decisionto reduce the battalions in the BEF's brigades from 4 to 3, the Shropshires left and the Nelson and Howe Battalions disbanded and used to top up the rest.



After that, it returned to the now quiet Somme sector and dug in to await the expected German spring offensive. When it came, in March 1918, it triggered a fighting retreat across the whole of the old Somme battlefield. The RND was in continuous action for 24 days but, by its men's firm discipline, dogged resistance and refusal to panic, it and the other units that retained their cohesion, helped save the situation. One factor that had helped preserve that cohesion and the Division's unique character and fighting spirit throughout its time as the 63rd was the Admiralty's having retained control of the naval and RM manpower. Unlike the rest of the BEF's divisions therefore, men who had been wounded but passed fit again were always returned to the RND and not sent as battle casualty replacements elsewhere. Another 6,000 men became casualties stemming the German offensive, however, including 4 battalion commanders killed. One of them, Lt Col Collings-Wells of the 4th Bedfords, was awarded a posthumous VC. And as a result of their casualties the 2 RM battalions had to be merged into 1 (just that 1 RM battalion remaining in the Division for the rest of the war) and 188 Brigade brought back up to strength by the addition of the 2nd Royal Irish Rifles.

1918 The final push to what would become the Armistice Line

With the Division rested and brought back up to strength it went back into action at the forefront of the advance to victory in the last 100 days of the War, when the Allied counter-offensive finally broke through the Hindenburg Line and drove the Germans back. At the end of August the well-respected Major General Lawrie was relieved as Divisional Commander by Major General Cyril Blacklock (at 38 the youngest Major General in the Army), who quickly showed that he, too, recognised the RND's differences as the key to its reputation and achievements and, like Lawrie, had no intention of changing them, thus earning its respect and loyalty in his own right. 2 more VCs were won, by CPO Prowse and Commander Beak of Drake Battalion, but these last 3 months of the War cost the Division a final 900 dead and 5,500 wounded. But when the Armistice came into effect on 11th November the RND was still in a spearhead position northeast of Mons, Hawke Battalion indeed actually the nearest unit of the BEF to the soil of Germany. There was great disappointment, indeed a feeling of its being cheated of its due, when the Division was then told it would not be part of the occupying force in the Rhineland, on that soil. The compensation, however, was that demobilisation would begin almost immediately, from early December

After its short and eventful life the Royal Naval Division was finally formally disbanded on Horse Guards Parade on the 6th of June 1919, the Prince of Wales taking the salute but the Division itself reduced by then to just the Hood, Hawke, Anson and Drake Battalions, the rest having been

either demobilised or sent elsewhere. Given that it was such an elite force, it may be surprising, and certainly not right, that its very existence, let alone its achievements, is so comparatively unknown to so many today. The reasons for this are not hard to find, however.

After the war the Army, understandably, had no wish to play up the significant role of a largely non-Army formation, while the Navy itself wasn't keen, either, to divert attention from the on its primary role at sea. Such politics almost certainly played its part in denying the Division a role in the occupation of the defeated Germany. The Admiralty's inclination was indeed to play down the fact that a very large proportion of its Service's total casualties had been incurred on land - as I mentioned at the start, some 40% of its entire wartime killed.

125,000 naval men in all passed through the Crystal Palace and Blandford to man a formation whose establishment on the ground at any one time was never more than 18,000. 11,379 were killed and 30,892 wounded, roughly 1/3 overall of those who served in Gallipoli and France.

The cost was indeed high.

Postscript 1 - Memorials:

A brass plate in the chapel of the old RN College at Greenwich records the RND's sacrifice and gallantry as follows:

Killed: 582 officers, 10797 other ranks
Wounded: 1364 officers, 29528 other ranks

VC	**5**
DSO	**42**
DSC	**17**
MC	**137**
DCM	**53**
CGM	**23**
DSM	**79**
MM	**555**
MSM	**9**

It's an impressive list by anyone's standards. Sadly, however, it tends to ignore, or miscount, the awards to the Division's army battalions. If not, the VC figure alone would be 8 rather than 5.

Permanent memorials to the Division exist at Beaucourt, Gavrelle and on the balustrade of the Old Admiralty Building looking on to Horse Guards Parade. There is also a memorial to the Collingwood Battalion on the Salisbury to Blandford road near the village of Pimperne. The Gavrelle memorial, juoutside the village, is the most recent. It was erected and unveiled on 8 May as 1991 and is easily the most striking and symbolic. A large Admiralty-pattern anchor sits inside the red-brick ruins of a symbolic building. Plaques of all the Division's constituent units are attached to the "building's" walls.

The inscription on the memorial fountain includes these words by Rupert Brooke (1887-1915) of Hood Battalion:

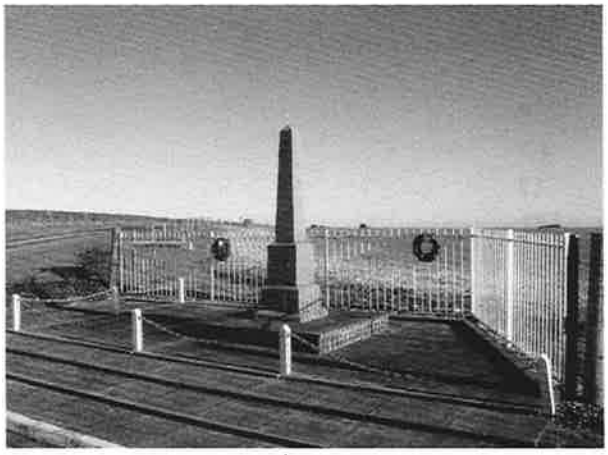
Blow out you bugles over the rich dead.
There's none of these so lonely and poor of old.
But dying has made us rarer gifts than gold.
These laid the world away: poured out the red

Sweet wine of youth: gave up the years to be
Of work and joy. And that unhoped serene
That men call age; and those who would have been
Their sons, they gave their immortality.

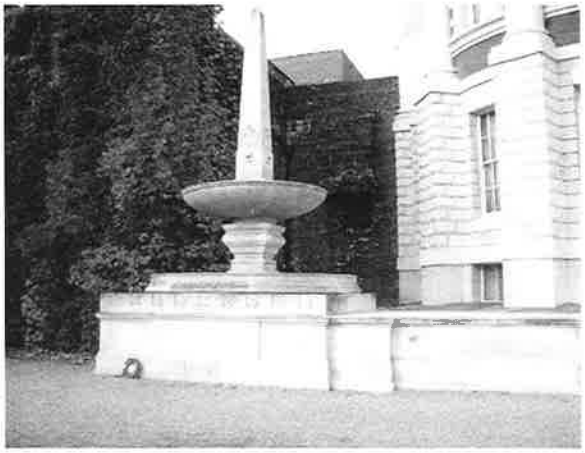
There is also an RND plaque in St George's Anglican Church in Ypres, commissioned and presented by battlefield enthusiasts from HMS Sultan, the RN's School of Marine and Air Engineering in Gosport, and dedicated in March 2011.

Beaucourt Gavrelle

Gavrelle Memorial erected 1991



Pimperne



Old Admiralty Building London

Postscript 2 - Shot At Dawn

In 2006 the Government issued a blanket pardon to the 300 of those 346 who had been executed for either cowardice (18), desertion (the majority, 266), disobedience to a lawful command (5), sleeping at post (2), quitting a post without authority (7) and casting away arms (2). The remaining 46, who had been executed for murder (37), mutiny (3) or striking or using violence to a superior (6), were not pardoned. The reason for the blanket pardon was that, as all the records of the individual courts martial had been destroyed in the Blitz in the 2nd World War it was impossible to distinguish between those cases that were clear miscarriages of justice and those which, by the penal codes of the time, were deemed to have legitimately punished habitual offenders, particularly serial deserters whose previous sentences had been commuted and had forfeited, as it were, any right to further leniency.