

# ROYAL MARINE BAND SERVICE

## FACT SHEET



## The Ceremony of Beating Retreat

The origin of this Ceremony is very obscure, but there is no doubt that it was one of the earliest to be instituted in the Army. One of the first references appears to have been made to such a ceremony, which was then called "Watch Setting", in the "Rules and Ordynauces for the Warre", dated 1554, and also by Robert Barrett in his "Theorike and Practice of Moderne Warres", dated 1598.

It appears that the original "call" was beaten by drums alone, and that it was some years before the fifes were introduced. The bugle came at a later date still, and the present ceremony of having a band paraded is a modern innovation, which is purely used as a spectacle.

In olden times, when the hours of darkness meant a cessation of hostilities until the following day, the object of the call was to collect and post the necessary guards for the camp, garrison, etc., for the night. It was also a warning for those outside the camp or garrison to retire or they would be kept outside the night. We thus find that there is some confusion arising between "Retreat" and "Tattoo". This confusion may, in part, have been caused owing to the French using the word "Retraite" for the familiar call to our "Tattoo". From the following extracts from old orders, it would appear conclusive that Retreat was meant to be separate from Tattoo and to be beaten at sunset.

The earliest reference to Retreat itself is to be found in an order dated 18th June, 1690, from an officer in the Army of James II, which states: "The generalle to be beate att 3 clock in ye morning.... Ye retreat to beate att 9 att night and take it from ye gards". A further seventeenth century reference is contained in an order of William III, dated 1694, which reads: "The Drum Major and Drummers of the Regiment which gives a Captain of the Main Guard are to beat the Retreat through the large street, or as may be ordered. They are to be answered by all the Drummers of the guards, and by four Drummers of each Regiment in their respective Quarters". These two references would, however, appear to refer more to what we now call "Tattoo", as they were carried out at night and not at dusk.

In the General Orders of the Duke of Cumberland, a distinction is made between the two ceremonies: "The Retreat is to beat at Sunset", whereas "Tattoo (is) to beat at (Ten, nine or eight) o'clock at night".

Whilst the Army were serving in Flanders, the Duke's Orders have these references to Retreat:

1745. Aug 17. "Soldiers who take their arms out of the bell tents after Retreat to suffer Death".

1746. May 5. "No Drummers to practice.... After the Retreat".

1747. May 26. "If any officers meet soldiers strolling from Camp after Retreat beating...."

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In "An Universal Military Dictionary" dated 1779, by Captain George Smith, Inspector of the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, Retreat and Tattoo are definitely separated, and Retreat is defined as follows:

"Retreat is also a beat of drum, at the firing of the evening gun; at which the Drum Major, with all the drums of the battalion, except such as are upon duty, beats from the camp colours, on the right to those on the left, on the parade of encampment; the drums of all the guards beat also; the trumpets at the same time sounding at the head of their respective troops. This is to warn the soldiers to forbear firing, and the sentinels to challenge 'till break of day', that the reveille is beat. The Retreat is likewise called setting the watch".

The 1799 "General Regulations and Orders for the Conduct of the HM Armed Forces in Great Britain" lay down that it shall be "beat at Sunset", and this is repeated in all editions of King's (and Queen's) Regulations down to the present day.

## The Parade (1958)

As the clock strikes the half-hour, fanfare will be sounded to herald the arrival of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, K.G., K.T., G.B.E., Captain General Royal Marines, who will be received with the Royal Salute by the Massed Bands. The parade is in honour of the Captain General's birthday on the 10th June.

The fanfare will be performed by fourteen trumpeters using the Memorial Silver Trumpets of the Royal Marines School of Music. These Silver Trumpets form the Memorial of the Royal Naval School of Music to commemorate their comrades who lost their lives in World War II (1939-45). They were subscribed for by all ranks, past and present, and were dedicated on 1st June 1948. On conclusion of the Royal Salute, the Massed Bands will step off in quick time and advance to the Horse Guards Buildings, counter-march and execute a pivot wheel to the left at the centre of the parade. After a further counter-march the Bands halt. Immediately the Bands cease playing, they will commence a Troop and advance across the parade in slow time, counter-march and halt.

The marches selected for this phase of the ceremony include the well-known South African tune "Sarie Marais", which was officially adopted as the march of the Royal Marines Commandos on 28th August 1952, and "The Captain General", which was composed in honour of the occasion when His Majesty King George VI, as the first Captain General, Royal Marines, dined with the officers of the Corps at the Savoy Hotel on 21st December 1949. "Where E'er You Walk" is an arrangement of Jupiter's aria from the opera "Semele" by Handel, which was first performed at Convent Garden on 10th February 1744. It dates from the period just prior to the Royal Marines becoming part of the Royal Navy.

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The Bands will again advance in quick time, for which a bugle march has been selected which is a lively tune giving full scope to the bugle section of the Bands. This will conclude the first part of the programme.

The Corps of Drums are now in position for Beating Retreat and the second part of the programme will be introduced by a fanfare, sounded by the 32 Silver Bugles.

These Silver Bugles were presented by the officers the Corps to the Royal Marines as a Memorial to the officers who were killed in World War I (1914-18). Eight were given to each of Chatham, Portsmouth and Plymouth Divisions and The Depot, Deal. They were used on all commemorative parades in the Royal Marines, and the fanfare used on this occasion is the one which is sounded on all important dates in the history of the Corps. It is interesting to note that this is only the second time that all the Silver Bugles have been paraded together for such a ceremony. They were previously used on a similar occasion in 1950.

No attempt has been made to produce a score of Retreat as beaten in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. This would be very difficult to demonstrate as the march in those days was more in the nature of a stroll than the march as it is known today. The Corps of Drums will, however, use a score dated 1810 to Beat Retreat as the halt and preceded by a Ceremonial Ruffle of Drums. This will be followed by the Drums marching across the parade and back again to the drum part of "The British Grenadiers". It is interesting to note here that "The British Grenadiers" was used, at one period, as the Regimental March of the Royal Marines.

The Bands will then continue with the third part of the programme with a Troop, for which "The Preobrajensky March" and "The Globe and Laurel" have been selected.

"The Preobrajensky March" is generally recognised as the finest ceremonial slow march of the old Russian Imperial Army and was the Regimental March of the first regiment of Foot Guards, the Preobrajensky Guards. It was also the regimental march of the Halberders Guard of Spain and the music was given to the Royal Marines by King Alphonso XIII and has been played from time to time ever since. "The Globe and Laurel" was officially adopted as the slow march of the Royal Marines on 24th April 1953. It is based on the old English air "Early One Morning" and was first used for Guard Mounting at St. James' Palace by the London Battalion of the Royal Marines which was formed specially to carry out the ceremonial duties in London in 1935. On completion of this Troop, the bands will break into quick time without halting and counter-march across the parade.

At this stage, the bands will carry out movements in combined and divided formations before finally halting in the centre of the parade for the Finale. The Drums will take post in rear and the Memorial Trumpets in front of the Bands, respectively.

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The Finale will open with the celebrated Military March "Pomp and Circumstance No. 1", so well-known as "Land of Hope and Glory". This will be followed by "Crimond", which has been chosen as the evening hymn. The Bands, Silver Bugles and Memorial Trumpets will then combine in the musical setting of the bugle call for Retreat, which is the same as that known as Sunset in the Royal Navy. This arrangement was made by Captain A.C. Green, RM who was Assistant Musical Director of the Royal Naval School of Music. It was first performed by the massed bands of the Mediterranean Fleet in the early 1930s. After a fanfare in which bugles, trumpets and bands are again combined, the Finale will conclude with the playing of "Rule Britannia" and the National Anthem.