

ROYAL MARINE BAND SERVICE

FACT SHEET



Corps memorial Dates

The Corps Memorial dates listed below are taken directly from BR1283 Royal Marines Instructions

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The Birth of the Corps - 28 October 1664

King Charles II sanctioned the formation of the Duke of York and Albany's Maritime Regiment of Foot - the first Regiment to be formed specially for service afloat. The Regiment was raised mainly from the Trained Bands of the City of London from which the RM derive the privilege of marching through the City of London with Colours flying, drums beating and bayonets fixed. The yellow stripe in our present-day Regimental flash commemorates the yellow uniforms of the Duke of York and Albany's Regiment.

The Capture of Gibraltar - 24 July 1704

The famous attack upon Gibraltar, which led to its surrender to the British, on 24 July 1704 was carried out by a brigade of British and Dutch Marines, 1800 strong, under the command of Prince George of Hesse-Darmstadt. In the following October, Gibraltar was besieged by the French and Spanish. The Marines from the British Fleet, held the fortress against repeated attacks until the siege was raised on 9 March 1705. In one incident in this fighting, Captain Fisher of the Marines with 17 of his men, successfully defended the Round Tower against the continued assaults of 500 French Grenadiers. A contemporary report of this noted defence says, "Encouraged by the Prince of Hesse, the garrison did more than could humanly be expected, and the English Marines gained an immortal glory."

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The Battle of Belleisle - 7 June 1761

Two battalions of Marines, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel John McKenzie, served with great distinction at the siege of Belleisle, and island off the north-west coast of France near St Nazaire in Quiberon Bay. With the 19th Regiment, these two units effected their first successful seaborne landing in the face of stiff opposition. They took part in all subsequent fighting on the island. The Marine battalions gained great fame at the final storming of the redoubts in June. Of their conduct on this occasion the Annual Register for 1761 said:

"No action of greater spirit and gallantry has been performed during the whole war".

The laurel wreath borne on the Colours and appointments of the RM is believed to have been adopted in honour of the distinguished service of the Corps during this operation.

The Battle of Bunker Hill - 17 June 1775

On the night of 16 June 1775 a rebel American force occupied dominating high ground to the north of the town of Boston where a British garrison was based. On the following morning General Sir William Howe launched an attack to dislodge the Americans which was repulsed with heavy losses. A second attack was also unsuccessful but the third, after Howe had been reinforced by a Marine Force and the 47th Regiment, finally took the position. The Marine Force under Major John Pitcairn consisted of the First and Second Marine Battalions. It suffered casualties of 29 killed and 87 wounded in storming the heights. A contemporary report said:

"The reputation of the Marines was never more nobly sustained. Their unshaken steadiness was conspicuous and their valour in closing with the enemy when part of the attacking column wavered gained them not only the admiration of their comrades but the commendation of their distinguished chief."

The Battle of Trafalgar - 21 October 1805

The Corps was present at Lord Nelson's victory over the combined fleets at Trafalgar, the most decisive sea fight in British history. Ninety-three officers and 2610 other ranks of the royal Marines at their traditional stations on the upper decks of the British ships bore a brave and important part in the success of the day. The losses were particularly heavy on board the leading ships; in Lord Nelson's flagship, the Victory, the detachment suffered one officer and 18 other ranks killed with 3 officers and 9 other ranks wounded. The total RM casualties during the battle were 4 officers and 117 other ranks killed with 14 officers and 226 other ranks wounded.

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Gallipoli - 28 April 1915

During February and March 1915 elements of the 3rd Royal Marines Brigade (Brigadier C N Trotman RMLI), landed largely unopposed on the Gallipoli peninsula to dismantle Turkish defensive positions. After the unsuccessful naval attempts to force the Narrows in March, the Turkish Army reinforced the peninsula in strength. Thereafter a major amphibious operation was required. The Plymouth Battalion RMLI took part in the initial landing on 25 April but the Brigade did not land until the night of 28/29 April when it went ashore at Anzac Cove to relieve 1 and 3 Australian Brigades. On 30 April it was joined in the line by 1 Royal Navy Brigade (Brigadier D Mercer RMLI) which contained the Deal RMLI Battalion. For the next 13 days both brigades were engaged in continuous heavy fighting, bearing the brunt of the Turkish attacks and displaying great resolution. After a counter-attack in the Monash Valley by Chatham and Portsmouth Battalions on 3 May 1915 the Turks were driven back with heavy losses. Major Quinn, a great Australian VC, said to Major Jerram of the RM Brigade: "The bravest thing I've seen so far was the charge of your two Battalions up that hill on Bloody Sunday". In another incident Lance Corporal W R Parker (Portsmouth Battalion RMLI) was awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry in evacuating a party of wounded men under fire. The RM Brigade's casualties during this period were 21 officers and 217 men killed, 29 officers and 764 men wounded and 122 men missing. On 12 May both brigades were deployed to Cape Helles to rejoin the RN Division for the remainder of the campaign.

The Raid on Zeebrugge - 23 April 1918

The 4th Battalion RM under the command of Lieutenant Colonel B N Elliot DSO took a leading part in the gallant enterprise against the German naval base at Zeebrugge, on St George's Day, 1918. The RMLI companies landed on the Mole in the face of determined opposition and held their positions while the entrance to the canal was successfully blocked and the Mole destroyed. Lieutenant Colonel Elliot, the last of a family who had served in the Corps from father to son since 1755, Major Cordner, his second-in-command, 9 other officers and 109 NCOs and men lost their lives in this gallant affair, while 233 all ranks were wounded and 13 taken prisoner. Two Victoria Crosses were awarded to the RM for their conduct during the operation.

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The Landings in Normandy - 6 June 1944

Over 16,000 Royal Marines took part in the largest amphibious operation in history. Most of the minor landing craft were manned by Royal Marines, as also were the guns of the support craft, and all capital ships carried an RM detachment. five RM Commandos (41,45,46,47 and 48) landed during the assault phase, grouped with three Army Commandos into two Special Service Brigades. In addition the Corps provided a number of specialist units including an Armoured Support Group, beach clearance and control parties and engineers. The first 48 hours of the operation were the most critical, involving a seaborne assault against a heavily protected and strongly held coastline. Most of the RM Commando were ashore by 0900 hours on 6 June and had achieved their initial objectives by early on 7 June. The Corps thus played a leading role in the establishment of secure beach-heads from which subsequent operations to defeat the German Army in the west were developed. Nine officers and 85 men were killed in action on 6 June. The number of wounded is not known. The following gallantry awards were conferred upon Royal Marines during the Normandy campaign, most of them for actions on 6 June: 5 DSOs, 3 OBEs, 13 DSCs, 10 MCs, 1 CGM, 26 DSMs and 13 MMs.

Assault on Walcheren - 1 November 1944

The leading troops in the successful seaborne attack on Walcheren in November 1944, were the 4th Special Service Brigade (Brigadier B W Leicester DSO) consisting of Numbers 41, 47, and 48 Commandos and Number 4 Army Commando. The three RM commandos attacked Westkapelle with little support, owing to the weather, other than that provided by the naval support craft, the guns of which were manned by RM crews. The success of the landing was in no small measure due to the self-sacrifice and gallantry of the naval support craft, and after some days' heavy fighting ashore, the batteries covering the mouth of the Scheldt were captured. The clearing of the entrance to the river, in which the RM thus performed a gallant and leading part, was of the greatest importance to the operations of the Allied Armies in Flanders.

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Recapture of the Falklands - 14 June 1982

The Corps was involved in virtually every significant aspect of the South Atlantic campaign, starting on 2 April when Naval party 8901 opposed the Argentine assault on the Islands. A company group from 42 Commando RM recaptured South Georgia on 25 April. From 1 May, SB Squadron carried out intelligence-gathering patrols which were critical to the success of the main amphibious landing in San Carlos Water on 21 May. The main landing was planned and executed by 3 Commando Brigade RM (Brigadier J H A Thompson OBE) which had been reinforced by two parachute battalions and other Army subunits. RM detachments served in many ships of the Task Force, and manned all landing craft. On 30 May, Major General J J Moore OBE MC* arrived in San Carlos with his headquarters, based upon HQ Commando Forces RM, and assumed command of all land forces which by then included 5 Infantry Brigade, 3 Commando Brigade RM, however, bore the brunt of the fighting throughout the campaign, commanding most of the battles which led to the surrender of the Argentine forces on 14 June. The professionalism and resilience of the Marines who took part were major factors in the success of this unique amphibious operation conducted at a range of nearly 8000 miles from the UK mounting base. A total of 3520 Royal Marines, approximately 50 percent of the Corps, took part in the campaign. Two officers and 25 men of the Corps were killed in action during the campaign, and 67 were wounded. The following honours and awards were subsequently conferred upon Royal Marines: 1KCB, 1 CB, 2 DSOs, 6 OBEs, 3 MBEs, 2 DSCs, 5 MCs, 2 DFCs, 10 MMs, 1 DCM, 3 DSMs, 1 DFM and 1 QGM.