A Life on the Ocean Wave Regimental Quick March

The music of the Regimental March is derived from two songs composed during the first half of the 19th Century which remained popular and in print until about the First World War. The bulk of the march is taken from Henry Russell's 'A Life on the Ocean Wave' published in the 1840's and the short central section (trio) is based on eight bars of 'The Sea' by Sigismund Neukomm, first published in 1832.

Sigismund Neukomm (1778-1858) was a favourite pupil of Haydn. He pursued a varied and interesting career in Austria, Sweden, Russia, France and Portugal before coming to England in 1829 where, for some eight or nine years he enjoyed considerable popularity. His success only declined with the arrival of Mendelssohn. 'The Sea' was one of several songs he wrote to words by Barry Cornwall (the pseudonym of Bryan Walter Procter), which became very popular. The words, so far as they relate to the Regimental March, are:

The Sea, the sea, the open sea!
The blue, the fresh, the every free,
The ever, ever free!

Henry Russell was born at Sheerness on 24 December 1812 and died in London, 8 December 1900. He was at one time a pupil of Rossini at Bologna and Naples, and went to Canada about 1833, and from thence to USA where he was organist of the Presbyterian Church, Rochester, NY. He returned to England in 1841. In 1897, Henry Russell wrote to Mr. George Miller, Bandmaster RMLI, Portsmouth Division (later Major/Director of Music) and said 'A Life on the Ocean Wave' was composed by me some 60 years ago, whilst in America. The origin of the song emanated from Epps (Epes) Sargant, the poet, walking with him on the Battery, New York, watching the ships in the harbour. The scene before him gave him an idea which induced him to write the words, 'I set them to music and the song ultimately became one of the most popular in England and America'. Henry Russell composed over 800 songs and in his book of reminiscences 'Cheer Boys, Cheer' has outlived nearly every other melody, with perhaps the exception of 'A Life on The Ocean Wave'.

The Regimental Marches of Her Majesty's Royal Marines
Before 1883, each Division of the Royal Marines had its own march, and even these frequently changed as new Commandants often introduced new marches. The DGRM, called upon the Bandmaster of each Division to arrange a march, if possible on a Naval song. Mr Kappey (Chatham); Mr Kreyer (Portsmouth); Mr von Froenherdt (Plymouth); (all German Bandmasters) and Mr John Winterbottom (Royal Marine Artillery), each submitted a march. The arrangement of the song 'A Life on The Ocean Wave' for the Regimental March was made by Mr Kappey, who was Bandmaster of the Chatham Division Band, RMLI, from 1892, using an old naval song 'The Sea' as the trio. This arrangement was authorised as the Regimental March of the Corps by the War Office in 1882 (Grove's Dictionary of 'Music and Musicians' says 1889), and by the Admiralty in 1920. Kappey died in 1907 and his music manuscripts were donated to the British Museum.

Preobrajensky Regimental Slow March

Presented to the Royal Marines by Admiral of the Fleet The Earl Mountbatten of Burma on 10th June 1964 and first performed as the Regimental Slow March of the Royal Marines on Horse Guards Parade that night. The march was composed by the Russian composer Donajowsky for the Russian Tzar's Preobrajensky Guard.

The words to A Life on the Ocean Wave

A Life on the Ocean Wave,
A home on the rolling deep,
Where the scattered waters rave
And the winds their revels keep

A Life on the Ocean Wave,
A home on the rolling deep,
Where the scattered waters rave
And the winds their revels keep
Like an eagle caged I pine
On this dull unchanging shore,
Oh give me the flashing brine
The spray and the tempest's roar
Once more on the deck I stand
Of my own swift gliding craft
Set sail farewell to the land
The gale follows fair abaft
We shoot through the sparkling foam
Like an ocean bird set free
Like an ocean bird, our home
We'll find far out on the sea

The land is no longer in view
The clouds have begun to frown
but with a stout vessel and crew
We'll say let the storm come down
And the song of our hearts shall be
While the wind and waters rave
A life on the heaving sea
A home on the bounding wave