

# ROYAL MARINES FORMATION SIGNS AND TITLES

BY

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Since my previous article appeared in "Newsletter" Volume 2 No 1, and, in answer to the appeal made in that Article for any additional information concerning Royal Marines cloth insignia, a number of letters, extracts from War Artists' "on the spot notes" and verbal information have been received by the Corps Historian and myself.

By devious routes the contents, concerning RM cloth insignia, have been received from War Artists' and Military Historian's notes. In all cases these "on the spot" sketches (bearing in mind WW2 security) were produced giving only the shape or design, colour and where seen (for example . . . . "Waterloo Station May 1941" - "In the Strand August 1942" etc). The designations of some of these then unknown signs have been provided by former Royal Marines personnel who recall wearing them.

In the following article, PART I will cover the designations of insignia identified and additional insignia reported, and PART II shows Insignia recorded in War Artists' notes, which remain unidentified.

Where reference is required to the previous article it will be signified thus:  
(Figure No Volume 2 No 1)

## PART I

### Royal Marines Battalions (circa 1940 - 1942)

Each Battalion was identified by individual 'cut out' Roman numerals (of Red cloth) worn below either the ROYAL MARINES title (Fig 1 Vol 2 No 1) or the brass RM title worn on the shoulder strap. Roman numerals I, II, III, V, VIII, IX, XV were worn by the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 8th, 9th Bns and the 15th RM (Machine Gun) Bn respectively.

The 7th RM Bn wore an Arabic '7' (Red cloth approx 1" high). A pair of Arabic '7's worn during 1941-42 have recently been presented to the Corps Museum.

NB: In some instances (during 1942) the Roman numerals were observed being worn in conjunction with the Trident sign of the Royal Marine Division (Fig 10 Vol 2 No 1).

### Mobile Naval Base Defence Organisation

A Lieutenant Colonel who served in MNBDO (II) confirmed that the Polar Bear sign on Red, Green, Yellow and Blue diagonally striped circle (Fig 16 Vol 2 No 1) was only used as a vehicle marking and not worn as an arm-badge. Units of MNBDO (II) wore geometrical shaped signs - Diamonds, Circles, Squares, Semi-circles and Triangles - coloured either Red, Green, Yellow or Blue.

The Colonel believed that in this formation:

AA Regiments wore Squares  
The Coast Artillery Regiment wore Triangles  
Landing and Maintenance Units wore Circles

When 2 AIR DEFENCE BRIGADE RM (from MNBDO (II) ) came 'under command' of Anti-Aircraft Command their Unit insignia was removed and they adopted the Royal Artillery Arm of Service strip.



(Red/Blue felt 2" x  $\frac{1}{4}$ " ) only

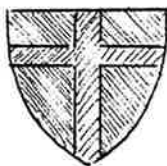
#### 12th Searchlight Regiment Royal Marines

When the 12th S/L Regt RM were deployed from MNBDO (II) in the defence of Plymouth they wore a green diamond below the ROYAL MARINES title. Since this information has been received however, a dark green diamond (of cloth with sides of 1") has been presented to the Corps Museum. This particular diamond was worn by "0" Searchlight Battery of the Regiment. It is therefore possible that the other batteries may have worn diamonds of either Red, Yellow or Blue.

#### 40 Royal Marines Commando

During WW2 40 RM Commando wore the Combined Operations sign (Figs 8/9 Vol 2 No 1) beneath the Commando numeral and title and NOT the RM Commando 'Dagger' sign (Fig 5 Vol 2 No 1). Other RM Commandos may also have only worn the Combined Operations sign. One of the 'Dagger' signs in my collection was worn by 47 Cdo RM. (See Editor's note at the end of PART I).

#### 5th Royal Marines Anti-Aircraft Regiment



Wore the 21st Army Group sign only, below the normal ROYAL MARINES title

(Blue Crusader's Cross on Red Shield)

#### 30th Assault Unit Royal Marines

A former member of the Unit has submitted a sketch of the numeral worn by the 30th Assault Unit RM. A black square (approx 1" square) on which is the numeral '30' in light blue.

#### EDITOR'S NOTE

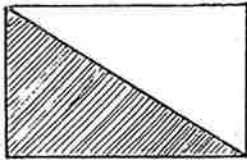
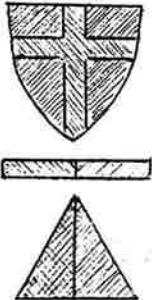
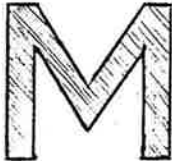


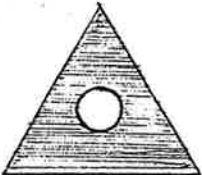
##### Commando 'Dagger' Flash

The Corps Historian states that, from replies he has had from a recent letter he wrote to the 'Globe and Laurel', it appears that the 'Dagger' flash superseded the Combined Operations flash in Commandos in about November or December 1944, ie soon after the Assault on Walcheren. This seems to coincide with the change in title from Special Service (SS) Brigades and Groups to Commando Brigades and Group. Many readers will know that this change was made to prevent the confusion in the roles of German SS Units and British Commando Units.

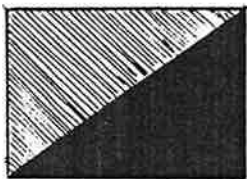
PART II

Insignia Recorded in 'On the Spot Notes' of War Artists

Although the following were all noted as being worn in conjunction with the title ROYAL MARINES they are as yet, unidentified

- A.  White (top) and Blue oblong  
Seen Waterloo Station May 1942 - Exeter 1941  
(by different Artists)  
Two correspondents have suggested this may have been worn by MNBDO (II) Group Signals
- B.  Red Cross on Blue Shield (possibly incorrect drawing of 21 Army Group sign)  
Red/Blue Arm of Service strip (Royal Artillery)  
Yellow/Blue triangle  
Seen Waterloo Station April 1945
- C.  Red Cloth 'M'  
Seen 'In the Strand' April 1941  
(Editor's note - could this have been the 18th RM (Mobile) Battalion?)
- D.  Red Cloth 'B'  
Seen 'Waterloo Station' September 1941  
(Editor's note - could this have been the Beach Battalion?)
- E.  Black Cloth Diamond  
Seen Waterloo Station May 1942
- F.  White Spot on Green Triangle  
Seen Waterloo Station November 1942  
The Royal Marine wearing this sign was observed to be also wearing a Khaki FS Cap with RM Badge on a green patch

G.



Red (top) and Black oblong

Seen Kings Cross Station May 1942 - Edinburgh  
July 1942

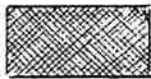
Between the ROYAL MARINES title and this sign  
was the Trident sign of the Royal Marine Division

### Colour Code

In the diagrams the following colour code has been used



RED



YELLOW



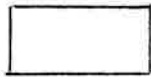
GREEN



BLUE



BLACK



WHITE

Should any reader recall wearing these signs, or have any idea of the designation of Units who wore them, such information would be greatly appreciated by myself or the Editor.