

THE ARMY: CHAPTER 6

The Royal Marines

OFFICERS

In the main the officers of the Royal Marines follow the rank distinctions of the Army but they do have one unusual rank—that of Captain-General. This rank goes back to the beginnings of the Standing Army, for in 1661 George Monk, Duke of Albemarle, was created Captain-General and Commander-in-Chief of the Forces. The Duke of York was appointed Captain-General of the Honourable Artillery Company just before he became King. When George VI became king he continued to use the title of Captain-General of the Honourable Artillery Company and in fact extended the title to other formations including in November 1948 the Royal Marines. The present Captain-General of the Royal Marines (1973) is the Duke of Edinburgh.

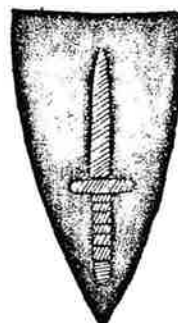
The earliest known badge in the Marines is the star worn on the little flap of their caps in the 1739-48 period. This badge has the red cross of St George within a blue circlet and is set on an eight-pointed star. The drawing in the contemporary print is very small and it could be intended as a version of the Garter Star. It would appear that the fowl anchor came in use about this time and later in the century it appeared on belt-plates, gorgets, drums, etc, and approximately from 1820 up to the Crimean War it appeared as a metal badge on the shoulders of all ranks. When new boxed epaulettes were introduced in 1829 it was noted that the anchor would continue in use for all ranks including field officers of marines. In line regiments field officers had an embroidered GR device on the strap, but not in the case of marines.

There is a tradition that the laurel wreath was awarded for successful action at Belleisle in June 1761 and it does appear on the gorgets before 1800. In April 1797 the Royal Crest was ordered to be worn on the officers' belt-plates—before the Marines were made Royal. When new colours were being thought of in the eighteen-twenties a claim for well over a hundred battle honours was presented. King George IV directed that instead of this plethora of names that they should be granted the badge of the Globe encircled with laurel to denote that the Marines had served in all parts of the world. This badge plus the anchor and the King's personal cypher also appeared on the colours presented in 1827 to the Royal Marine Divisions. The 'globe and laurel' is still the proudly-borne badge of the Royal Marines.

The artillery portion of the Marines grew gradually and when it was eventually recognised as a separate branch the officers and men wore a blue uniform closely following that of the Royal Artillery but with special differences. In 1855 the red-coated Marines were named the Royal Marine Light Infantry and had the distinguishing badge of a bugle horn. The artillery branch had the grenade of the

artillery men but amalgamation in 1923 brought about the abolition of both grenade and bugle horn.

The creation of Royal Marine Commandos in the Second World War brought new distinctions. The red commando dagger on a dark blue patch was worn on the sleeve by all personnel. Both officers and men later adopted coloured lanyards and garter flashes when appropriate. Men of the headquarters of 3 Commando Brigade wore (and still wear) green lanyards. No. 40 RM Commando adopted light blue, 41 old gold, 42 white, 43 old gold and scarlet and 45 scarlet. Not all these commandos exist today. The green lanyard stems from the green beret now adopted as a distinction of the Royal Marine Commandos. The blue beret had been worn by the Royal Marines since 1943 but by December 1960 only the recruits in training wore the blue beret and all others assumed the green beret as soon as they were 'commando-trained'.



Royal Marines commando patch, red embroidered on dark blue

OTHER RANKS

NCOs of the Royal Marines wore epaulettes or shoulder-knots as a distinction but changed over to chevrons later than the army. An order of September 1807 stated that sergeants and corporals were to wear on their right arms chevrons instead of the shoulder-knots previously worn. In 1814 the company sergeants were granted a special badge, with extra pay no doubt, inspired by the award to colour-sergeants in the army in 1813. The spontoon had been used as a mark of rank by sergeants but in 1827 the pike, or halbert as it was called in orders, was to be discontinued and sergeants in future were to carry muskets when under arms.

In 1829 the master of the band was noted as having four gold chevrons on each arm as well as two small epaulettes on his shoulders. Apparently it had been customary for NCOs to wear small scarlet chevrons on their forage caps, as an order in January 1837 stated that these were to be replaced by brass chevrons. Blue chevrons had been worn on the red shell jackets but these were replaced by white ones in 1849. The portrait of a marine who had been promoted in 1849 to sergeant (and colour-sergeant) depicts him wearing three white chevrons on both arms and a gold embroidered crown. In the author's collection is a corporal's jacket or coat which carries two white tape chevrons on blue on both arms and also the metal badge of an anchor on the shoulder-straps. Photographs show these jackets or coatees with white chevrons for good conduct just above the cuff on the right sleeve.

The embroidered badge of a colour-sergeant in the reign of William IV had a crown over a Union colour with crossed swords on the staff and an anchor below, all over a single gold chevron on blue silk. A wood-engraving in the *Illustrated London News* of March 1854 shows a colour-sergeant of the Royal Marine Artillery wearing the elaborate badge of a crown over a globe and laurel on a Union colour with a grenade and crossed swords under the flag. A single gold chevron was worn on the right arm, and on the left arm three chevrons without any badge. This rule for chevrons agrees with a later photograph of Colour-Sergeant J. Prettyjohn V.C., of the Royal Marine Light Infantry.

By late Victorian times the RMLI colour-sergeant's badge had changed to a very elaborate pattern. A crown was over the bugle horn and below these was a globe on two crossed Union colours with an anchor below, all within two branches of laurel. Below this again were two crossed swords, all being set over a single gold chevron. Later this badge was worn over three gold chevrons, in fact up to 1923.

The RMA colour-sergeant for the last period of his full dress uniform also had his special badge set over three gold chevrons on scarlet ground. His badge was now two heavy silver crossed gun-barrels almost hiding two crossed colours with the Tudor Crown above and the anchor below, all within the laurel wreath. On amalgamation in 1923 both badges were discontinued in favour of one with the globe on two crossed Union colours with the crown above and the anchor below, set within the laurel wreath and with three gold chevrons below.

To return to other NCOs and other distinctions, it is to be noted that in February 1855 when the red-coated marines were designated Light Infantry by Queen Victoria the bugle horn appeared, which might explain the order of January 1866 ordering bugle ornaments to be worn instead of the brass chevrons (presumably on the NCOs' caps). An order of 1st February 1857 had stated that chevrons were not to be allowed on forage caps of NCOs, nor on both arms, nor of gold unless by Authority, which implies some unauthorised local practices. In 1860 blue cloth chevrons were permitted on the greatcoats of all NCOs. In 1862 colour-sergeants were permitted to have 'chevrons of gold lace instead of worsted as heretofore'. Four years later sergeant-instructors of gunnery and musketry of the second class were also allowed gold lace chevrons.

In 1881 the order that NCOs were to wear chevrons on the right sleeve only was repeated. The good conduct badges (actually chevrons also) were to be worn on the left arm below the elbow with their points upwards. As from April 1891 the armourer-sergeant, the provost-sergeant, the cook-sergeant and the hospital-sergeant were to be clothed as staff-sergeants, that is to say, wearing three chevrons point upwards below the right elbow. The armourer-sergeant was also permitted to wear a gold embroidered badge of the hammer and pincers. In modern times the provost-sergeant still wears three gold chevrons (point upwards) on the forearm to mark his appointment but when that appointment is withdrawn he wears the three chevrons on the upper sleeve in the normal manner. Corporals and lance-corporals wear two and one chevron on the upper arms in gold lace, also of the 'broken bias' pattern.

Just as the army multiplied the various ranks of NCOs and the proficiency and specialist badges, so did the Royal Marines, in most cases following the army pattern but using their own corps colourings. The sergeant-major had the Royal Arms badge, while the quartermaster-sergeant instructors of infantry, of gunnery, of musketry and of physical training all wore the large crown ^{and} the three latter ^{of pin} ^{lance} ^{in 2nd rank} having in addition crossed gun barrels, crossed muskets and crossed Indian clubs respectively. On amalgamation these specialist badges continued in use for colour-sergeants and below in the branches of gunnery, drill and platoon weapons and physical training. Crossed flags for signallers also continued in use.

More modern groups include the basic pattern with the wreath and distinguishing letters, such as AE for assault engineers, CL for cliff leaders, HW for heavy weapons, LC for landing craft, SC for swimmer-canoeist, C for clerk and K for cook. Normally the above badges indicate a higher qualification with the addition of a star above for third class, one star above and another below for second class and a crown above for first class. A crown above and two stars below the basic badge are worn by those qualified as instructors in gunnery, physical training and signalling. It will be noted that the addition of crowns and stars follows the naval system. Although marine officers may follow the army-type rank badge, marine other ranks incline towards naval distinctions so that their specialist quali-

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ations are in keeping with those of the naval personnel with whom they are working. Thus gunnery instructors, signallers and physical training personnel have naval pattern badges including the crossed Indian clubs instead of the crossed swords of the army. There are other complicated variations for instructors which will not be dealt with here.

During the Second World War a necessity arose for a specially qualified group of warrant officers to rank with the staff naval officer. In 1943 an embroidered badge was worn on the shoulder strap. This had WO in two laurel sprays making a wide oval badge embroidered in worsted on khaki or in gold for the blue uniform. In April 1949 all these warrant officers were upgraded to commissioned officers and the commissioned warrant officer group above them was upgraded to senior commissioned officers.

*In being before
the war. - even
before 1914*

Band badges

As the bands in the Royal Marines have been closely associated with their divisions or depots, they have from time to time acquired special honorary badges.

It was in July 1876 that the RMLI band of the Portsmouth Division was given permission to wear Prince of Wales' feathers on their headdress to commemorate the visit of the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) to India in the previous year. These plumes were worn up to 1923 when the RMLI and the RMA amalgamated as the Royal Marines. For a while those musicians still continuing to serve in the depot band at Deal wore the badge but when the band was broken up in 1930 this particular distinction disappeared.

The same badge was awarded to the RMLI band of the Plymouth Division in 1921 after they had accompanied the Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII) to Canada and Australia. To mark a difference between the two bands the Portsmouth band wore their plumes just under the anchor at the bottom of the helmet plate and the Plymouth band wore their plumes at the top just under the crown. On amalgamation the Plymouth Group band continued to wear the plumes.

The RMLI band of the Chatham Division received the White Rose of York for their headdress in 1902 after accompanying the Duke of Cornwall and York (later King George V) on his tour of the colonies in 1901. Although the Rose continued in the Royal Marines band at Chatham after 1923, this band was broken up in 1950 and the distinction disappeared.

Yet a third badge is that awarded to the RMA band in 1912. They accompanied King George V to India for the Delhi Durbar. For this service they were awarded the cypher of GVR to be worn on the helmet plate and on the ball of the gilt grenade of the cap badge. In 1923 this badge was transferred to the band of the Portsmouth Division (now Group). The badge today is worn in conjunction with the combined cyphers of Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, i. e. EHR/PP, to mark the Commonwealth tour in 1954.

From early in the nineteenth century the band on the Royal Yacht had been popular but it was not until 1903 that King Edward VII established a special band for the Royal Yacht from the RMA band at Portsmouth, which in 1925 was part of the Portsmouth Division and after 1950 the Portsmouth Group. In 1925 the Portsmouth band was permitted to wear a shoulder flash bearing 'Royal Yacht', this distinction being transferred later from the Division to the Group band. Today the title of 'Royal Yacht' is embroidered in gold wire on dark blue with the crown above in gold and crimson. This is worn on the blue uniform 1" (25.4 mm) below the seam of the right shoulder. On the Lovat green uniform the gold letters are on green and on the white rig the title is in blue.

1923

There are several arm badges for bandmasters. There is a lyre within a closed wreath topped by a crown which is worn by the staff bandmaster (equivalent to a quartermaster-sergeant). There is also a lyre within an open wreath also topped by a crown which is worn by a bandmaster (equal to a colour-

sergeant) and there is the lyre over three up-pointing chevrons (obsolete in 1969) for the bandmaster ranking with a staff-sergeant. Drum-major and bugle-major have their respective badges on the forearm over four upwards-pointing chevrons.



Royal Marine Artillery band badge, 1903-23



King's Badge for the best all-round member of the King's Squad

The King's Badge

The King's Badge is a special badge awarded to ^{*the best all round recruit in*} ~~members~~ of the King's Squad. In March 1918 when King George V inspected the recruits under training at the depot at Deal he expressed the wish that the senior squad of recruits should be known as the King's Squad. Later a special badge was awarded to the best all-round recruit when he passed out for duty. This embroidered badge consisted of a GVR cypher between two laurel branches and the wearer was known as the King's Badgeman. This badge is worn at the point of the left shoulder throughout a man's service irrespective of the rank he obtains. There is a pattern in gold on blue and one in gold on green depending on the uniform.

