

# Royal Marines

## Corps Memorial Dates

### 23 April 1918 - The Raid on Zeebrugge

The 4th Battalion under the command of Lieutenant Colonel B N Elliot DSO took a leading part in the gallant enterprise against the German Naval Base Zeebrugge, on St George's Day 1918. The RMLI companies landed on the mole in the face of determined opposition and held their positions whilst the entrance to the canal was successfully blocked and the mole destroyed. Lt -Col Elliot, the last of a family who had served in the Corps from father to son since 1775, Major Cordner, his second in command, 9 other officers and 109 NCOs and men lost their lives in this gallant affair, whilst 233 all ranks were wounded and 13 taken prisoner. Two Victoria Crosses were awarded to the Royal Marines for their conduct during this operation.

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### 28 April 1915 - Gallipoli

During February and March 1915 elements of the 3rd Royal Marines Brigade (Brigadier C N Trotman RMLI), which was made up of Chatham and Portsmouth battalions RMLI, landed largely unopposed on the Gallipoli peninsular to dismantle Turkish defensive positions. After the unsuccessful Naval attempts to force the Narrows in March the Turkish Army re-informed the peninsular 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 on the Monash Valley by Chatham and Portsmouth battalions on 3 May 1915, the Turks were driven back with heavy losses. Major Quinn, a grate Australian VC, said to Major Jerram of 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 R W Parker (Portsmouth Battalion RMLI) was awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry in evacuating a party of wounded men under fire.

The Royal Marines 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 Royal Naval Division for the remainder of the campaign.

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## **6 June 1944 - The Landings in Normandy**

Over 16,000 Royal Marines took part in the largest amphibious operation in history. Most of the landing craft were manned by Royal Marines and all capital ships carried an RM detachment. Five RM Commandos (41, 45, 46, 47 and 48) were 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 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 Commandos were ashore by 0900 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 beachheads from which subsequent operations to defeat the German Army in the west were developed. Nine officers and 85 men were killed in action on the 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 the 6 June: five DSO, three OBE, thirteen DSC, ten MC, one CGM, twenty-six DSM and thirteen MM.

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## **7 June 1761 - The Battle of Belle Isle**

Two battalions of Marines, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel John McKenzie, served with great distinction at the siege of Belle Isle near Quiberon Bay. With the 19th Regiment these two units effected the first successful landing, in the face of stiff opposition. They took part in all subsequent fighting on the island. The Marine battalion 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 of the war". The laurel wreath borne on the Colours and appointments of the Royal Marines is believed to have been adapted in honour of the distinguished service of the Corps during this operation.

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## **14 June 1982 - Recapture of the Falkland Islands**

The Corps was involved in virtually every significant aspect of the South Atlantic campaign starting on the 2 April when Naval Party 8901 opposed the Argentine assault on the Islands. A company group from 42 Cdo RM recaptured South Georgia on 25 April. From 1 May Special Boat Squadron carried out intelligence gathering patrols which were critical to the success of the main amphibious landing in San Carlo water on 21 May. The main landing was planned and executed by 3 Commando Brigade RM (Brigadier J H A Thompson OBE) which deployed at full strength (40, 42, 45 Cdo's RM and Cdo Log Regt RM). RM detachments served in many of the ships of the Task Force and all landing craft were RM manned.

On 30 May Major General J J Moore OBE MC arrived in San Carlos with his Headquarters, based on HQ Cdo Forces RM, and assumed command of all land forces including the Army's newly arrived 5 Inf Bde. 3 Cdo Bde RM continued to bear the brunt of the fighting throughout the campaign command 5 of the 6 battalion-scale battles that took place before the surrender of the Argentine forces on the 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 8,000 miles from the UK mounting base. A total of 3,520 Royal marines, approximately 50 % of the Corps, took part in this campaign.

Two officers and 25 men were killed in action during the campaign and 67 were wounded. The following honours and awards were subsequently conferred upon Royal Marines: one KCB, one CB, two DSO, six OBE, three MBE, one MBE, one DSC, five MC, two DFC, one DCM, three DSM, ten MM, one DFM and one QGM.

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## 17 June 1775 - The Battle of Bunker Hill

On the night of 16 June 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 47th Regiment, finally took the position. The Marine Force under Major John Pitcairn consisted of the Firsts 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 the enemy when part of the attacking column waivered, gained them not only the admiration of their comrades but the commendation of their distinguished chief.'*

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## 24 July 1704 - The Capture of Gibraltar

The famous attack on Gibraltar, which led to its surrender to the British on the 24 July 1704, was carried out by a brigade of British and Dutch Marines, 1,800 strong, under the command of Prince George of Hesse-Darmstadt. In the following October, Gibraltar was besieged by the French and Spanish. The Marine brigade, which had been reinforced shortly before by a further 400 Marines from the British fleet, held the fortress against repeated attacks until the siege was raised on 9 March 1705. In one incident in the fighting, Captain Fisher of the Marines with 17 of his men successfully defended the Round Tower against the continual 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 be humanly expected, and the English Marines gained immortal glory'*.

## **21 October 1805 - The Battle of Trafalgar**

Nearly one third of the Corps was presented at the Lord Nelson's victory over the combined fleets at Trafalgar, the most decisive sea fight in British history. Ninety-two officers and over 3,600 NCOs and men of the Royal Marines at their traditional stations on the upper decks of the British ships, bore 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*, all four RM officers and over 50 men of the RM detachment were killed or wounded. The total RM casualties during the battle were 5 officers and 121 men killed or died of wounds and 12 officers and 204 men wounded.

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## **28 October 1664 - The Birth of the Corps**

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 Royal Marines derive the privilege of marching through the City of London with Colour flying, drums beating and bayonets fixed. The yellow strip in our present day regimental flash commemorates the yellow uniforms of the Duke of York and Albany's Regiment.

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## **1 November 1944 - The Assault of Walcheren**

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 Nos 41, 47 and 48 Commandos and No 4 Army Commandos. 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 Royal Marines thus performed a gallant and leading part, was of the greatest of the operations of the Allied Armies in Flanders