

## **The National Archives: How to Find a Royal Marine's Division**

### 1. How do I find a Marine's Division?

There are five main ways to establish a Marine's Division:

If you know any of his medal entitlements, look at the campaign medal rolls in ADM 171.

If you know the name of a ship he served on, and the date, use the Navy List (these are on the open shelves in the Microfilm Reading Room) or Ship's musters (ADM 36, ADM 37, ADM 38, ADM 39) to establish the ship's home port. Before 1947 marines who were to serve on board a ship were drawn from the same RM Division as the home port of the ship.

If you know his Company number, and a date, consult the table in Appendix 1 of Readers' Guide No. 10 The Records of the Royal Marines by Garth Thomas. Alternatively you can consult the tables of allocation of Company Numbers to Divisions as set out in the Lists of Officers of the Royal Marines in ADM 118/230-336 and ADM 192.

If your man was a war casualty in the First World War consult ADM 242/7-10. These are documents similar to a war graves roll. For the Second World War see the Royal Marines Museum book A Register of Royal Marine Deaths, 1939-1945, available at The National Archives. If you have an address where he lived, from a birth or marriage certificate, or from the census, the nearest Division to that address may be the best one to try first, although Marines were recruited from all over the British Isles. If none of these methods help in your particular case you will have to order each piece within ADM 159 that contains his service number, regardless of Division. If you do not have the service number you should order the index for your man's surname in ADM 313. This should give you the service number.

### 2. What is a Division?

It was in 1664 that the first regiment of land soldiers was raised for service at sea. In 1690 two Marine Regiments were formed, and in 1755 an Order in Council raised 5,700 Marines grouped into 50 "companies" of 100 men each. Companies were then assigned to one of 3 Grand Divisions at Chatham, Plymouth and Portsmouth, and from 1805 to 1869 a further Division was quartered at Woolwich.

The "companies" within each Division were purely administrative units, which bore no relation to the tactical Companies of Battalions when the Marines were in active service. Tactical Companies may have contained men from many different Divisional Companies. George III designated the marines "Royal" in 1802. From 1855 the whole Royal Marines took the name Royal Marine Light Infantry (Red Marines). In 1804 the Royal Marine Artillery companies were formed and attached to Divisions, and in 1859 were made into a separate Division. They were sometimes known as the Blue Marines, but in 1923 the two branches became the single corps of Royal Marines.

Correspondence and papers on policy matters, including the raising and deployment of marine companies, may be found in several series of records. The In-Letters of the Admiralty include a special section for letters from marine officers 1787-1839 (ADM 1/3246-3357), and the Out-Letters also include a section for letters to, or concerning, marines for the period 1703-1845 (ADM 2/1147-1251).

### 3. Records of Divisional Headquarters

Each Divisional Headquarters maintained its own letter books: as set out in the table below. The principal categories of document contained in the Divisional records are also shown, together with the extreme dates covered for each category. Please note that records may not be complete for the full date range shown. Some of these records contain information about individuals. Included also in these classes is correspondence with the Admiralty and letter books of a more general character.

Chatham, Plymouth, Portsmouth, RM Artillery, Woolwich.  
Catalogue reference: ADM 183, ADM 184, ADM 185, ADM 193, ADM 81.  
Order books 1755-1941, 1760-1881, 1806-1941, 1890-1918 -  
General weekly returns 1755-1869, 1761-1919, 1797-1820, 1868-1869.  
Discharge books 1773-1884, 1801-1892, 1816-1888, 1806-1869.  
Embarkation books 1878-1884, 1803-1832, 1803-1814, 1805-1837, 1805-1814.  
Registers of births, marriages & deaths 1830-1913, 1862-1920, 1810-1853  
1822-1869.

### 4. Royal Marine Office (RMO)

Records of the RMO (formerly the Department of the Commandant General, Headquarters Royal Marines) include a series of general letter books for the years 1803 to 1868 in ADM 56, and thereafter a separate series of letter books for the affairs of each Division; ADM 57-63. Correspondence with the Admiralty is in ADM 191, and that with the War Office in ADM 200. General correspondence and papers of the RMO, which include historical compilations and statistical returns, are to be found in ADM 201. General Standing Orders for the years 1893, 1902, 1910 and 1922 are in ADM 64. Sea Instructions and Shore Instructions, 1759, are in ADM 96/3.