

THE ROYAL MARINES BAND SERVICE

The Drummers, or Buglers.

Each of the six companies in the regiment of Marines formed in 1664 had a Drummer. His role was to pass commands by beat of drum. The six Drummers were the Regiments first 'Signallers'. Later, the drummers played the fife which, when the Drummers were 'massed', enabled them to lead the marines with marching music played on both instruments. Later, in the nineteenth century when the sound of gunfire had increased to a level that confused the sound of the drum signal, the bugle was introduced and the Drummer became a 'Drummer and Bugler' and had to be proficient in all three instruments. This title was later changed to the current one – Bugler. The use of the fife ceased during World War II but during the 1960's Buglers again acquired a third instrument – the Herald Trumpet, used for fanfares. The current Corps of Drums, a collective title for Buglers that recalls the first Drummers of 1664, are very proud that they can trace their continuous history to the very birth of the Corps – 1664.

The Royal Marine Divisional Bands.

During the eighteenth century the Marines were formed into four Divisions that were located at the major dockyards of Chatham, Portsmouth, Plymouth and Woolwich. In the 19th century the Royal Marine Artillery was formed at Eastney. All of these Divisions had bands that had been created at various times during that period. These bands were of a very high standard and each of the musicians had to play an orchestral and a military band musical instrument. Occasionally one or other of these bands would be chosen to accompany members of the Royal Family on tours – very often on board the Royal Yacht.

The Royal Naval School of Music and Royal Marine Bands.

In 1903 the Royal Marines were given full responsibility for providing music to the Royal Navy. The Royal Naval School of Music at Eastney trained bands that were sent on board battleships and cruisers. The musicians had to play orchestral and military band instruments and also had to play as a dance band. These bands had a military role which was to work in the Transmitting Stations – the heart of the ships gunnery control system. As this apparatus was located in the bowels of the ship escape was very difficult and they suffered very high casualties. The World War I and World War II War Memorials and the World War II Book of Remembrance are on display in the Royal Marines Museum.

The Royal Marines Band Service.

In 1950 the Divisional Bands were amalgamated with the Royal Marine Bands to form the Royal Marines Band Service. The Buglers became part of this organisation in 1978. The modern Band Service is respected for its musical

ability and its ceremonial presence throughout the world. It still retains a military role which involves it as part of Medical Squadron, as Decontamination Teams, as drivers and for general protection and convoy escort duties. Above all they are instantly recognisable as, with white helmets and blue uniforms, they feature in the great ceremonial displays.