

# UNIT HISTORY SUMMARIES

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## LAND UNITS 1919–38

### **63rd (Royal Naval) Division and 3rd RM Bde**

First called the Royal Naval Division with three brigades, two of seamen and 3rd (RM) Brigade, the Division served in the Dardanelles and Gallipoli campaigns of 1915 and from 1916 served in France and Belgium.<sup>1</sup> The 3rd Bde originally contained four RM battalions, but after losses at Gallipoli they were reorganised in August 1916 into two battalions (see next entry). There were several Marine supply, medical and other units (including 190th MG Coy RM) under the division's command. All were demobilised under army arrangements, the long-service Marines being dispersed to their RMLI Divisions in June 1919.

### **1st and 2nd RMLI Battalions**

Originally four<sup>2</sup> battalions, after losses at Gallipoli the Chatham and Deal Battalions formed the 1st RMLI Bn, the Portsmouth and Plymouth Bns formed the 2nd RMLI Bn and 3rd Bde HQ was absorbed into the divisional units in 1916. Further casualties led to the merging of the 2nd RMLI into the 1st RMLI in April 1918, giving a combined strength of about 1,100 all ranks in November 1918; the unit was disbanded with the RN Division in June 1919.

### **3rd RMLI Battalion**

Raised in October/November 1916<sup>3</sup> to replace army units as garrisons on Greek-administered islands in the eastern Aegean. Gen Sir H. E. Blumberg, KCB, a Brigadier at that time, commanded from June 1918 until November 1919. In the summer of 1919 4,000 Russian refugees were housed in a camp which had been improvised by the Battalion which was now small in numbers. Meanwhile 170 of the Battalion manned Bosphorous forts<sup>4</sup> from January to November 1919, when all the garrisons were reduced to a total of 194 all ranks, the French taking over when 15,000 defeated White Russians arrived on Mudros, and the garrison finally left the islands on 25 June 1921.

### **4th RM Battalion**

Assaulted the mole at Zeebrugge on 23 April 1918, and in their honour no subsequent '4th battalion' has been raised.

### **5th RM Battalion**

Formed in September 1918 with 20 platoons (907 all ranks), mostly 45-year-olds, to operate electrically controlled sea mines etc. in coastal defences. Disbanded January–February 1919.

### **RM Field Force**

Formed 5 May 1918,<sup>5</sup> the force of 365 all ranks was commanded by Lt-col R. O. Paterson, RMA, for service in Murmansk to support local forces (see Chap 2). They established control posts along the railway, guarded many wooden bridges, and trained 150 Poles to use MGs. A hundred<sup>6</sup> were sent with an Allied assault force, mostly comprising French troops, landed from British warships on Modyuski Island (River Dwina, near Archangel). These Marines later served with the Naval Brigade landed in that area, until July 1919, having been in action in support of British army units. Elements of the field force in Murmansk were concentrated for ski training but were not in action until early May 1919 after the spring thaw. They sailed from Murmansk on 10 July and were disbanded on their return to the UK.

### **6th RM Battalion**

Formed<sup>7</sup> during July 1919 under Lt-col A. de W. Kitkat, RMLI, for supervision of the plebiscite in Schleswig-Holstein (northern Germany), they were diverted to relieve northern Russian garrisons (see Chapter 2). Many of the older men were employed in GHQ and as clerks on the Murmansk railway. The companies, each reduced by these commitments to some 140 or so young Marines, were sent to forward areas on Lake Onega. At Kapaselga some 15 miles south of the Medvyejya Gora base the Marines took over the outpost line, which had been pushed south. General Maynard was moving what forces he could to secure lines of communication the Shunga Peninsula where a rising against the Bolsheviks had been successful. About this time several<sup>8</sup> small units 'were relegated to the lines of communication', including some Marines after they refused duty.

On 23 August the companies were deployed, and on the night of 28–9 August moved against two concentrations of Finnish<sup>9</sup> troops supporting the Bolsheviks (see Chapter 2). After this action and the subsequent operations, the companies were replaced by White Russians and Serbians (a battalion of these fighters<sup>10</sup> served in the Allied force), and sailed from Murmansk on 8 October, being dispersed a week later. There has never been another 6 Battalion RM.

### **7th RM Battalion**

Formed in the summer of 1919 from RMs landed under Lt-Col J. W. Hudleston, RMA, from the Grand Fleet, the Battalion was to help supervise a plebiscite, but was not used and re-embarked.

### **8th Battalion RM**

The Battalion was brought together in June 1920, sailing to Cork in HMS *Valiant* and *Warspite* before being taken by destroyer to protect coastguard and signal stations around the coast. The three companies were split into detachments, none smaller than 27 strong,<sup>11</sup> allowing for two men to be on leave in the UK, with posts often 100 miles from the companies' HQs. Atypical post was at Bunrana<sup>12</sup> on Lough Swilly (Donegal), some 20 miles north of Londonderry. Apart from Lewis gun and rifle practice at a box towed astern of a dinghy, no shots were fired.

Stations were to be defended to the last if attacked.<sup>13</sup> The 1922 G&L p 39 refers to 'considerable casualties'. Individuals with the Battalion were relieved for home service from time to time, and the Battalion was not withdrawn until the spring of 1922, after the Anglo-Irish treaty was negotiated. The Marines by that date had been guarding

some key points for five years, as the 8th Battalion had taken over these duties from the rear party of an RM Battalion that went to Ireland in 1916.

#### **9th Battalion**

This had been formed after the Armistice in 1918 and was one of the Battalions deployed at the time of the coal miners' strike in 1921.

#### **10th Battalion**

Formed by the time of the coal miners' strike in 1921, elements were deployed apparently to defend strategic installations.

#### **11th Battalion and RM detachments in Turkey**

Turkish Nationalists opposed to the Sultan refused to accept certain treaties negotiated with him by the allies, including the Greeks, who the British government initially supported. Marines and sailors from the Mediterranean Fleet numbering 3,600<sup>14</sup> were landed in Constantinople (modern Istanbul) on 16 March 1920<sup>15</sup> and met no resistance. In June ships and planes bombarded the Nationalists occupying the Ismid Peninsula and these Turks withdrew. Early in July strong parties of Marines and seamen were again landed from the Fleet; these were later withdrawn but the Fleet's presence maintained in Constantinople. A Nationalist army in 1921 drove the Greeks back to their enclave in Smyrna and the French and Italians made peace with the Turks.

The 11th Battalion was initially formed during the emergency declared for the 1921 coal strike.

In 1922 the Greeks invested Constantinople, weakening their Smyrna army to do so. A few Marines were landed at Smyrna 'as a calming influence'<sup>16</sup> from the battleship *King George V*, but the city caught fire a few days later and on 13 September was burnt to the ground. Greeks and Armenians numbering 250,000 were then evacuated by sea, and Nationalist Turkish forces of 35,000 moved towards the Dardanelles. Five British army battalions and some planes blocked the Turks' possible advance across the straits, the troops digging in on the Asian shore around Chanak. The 11th RM Battalion — mobilised in a few days — sailed on 28 September,<sup>17</sup> their transport ship reportedly reaching Constantinople in five days. The Battalion's four companies, some 700<sup>18</sup> in all under Lt-Col J. A. M. A. Clark, CMG, RMLI, included an RMA company sent out as infantry. These gunners were remustered for duty with the RMA Heavy Batteries,<sup>19</sup> for on 21 October Maj W. H. Tripp, DSO, MC, joined the Battalion to command 12 naval guns the Marines had installed by building piers on the northern shores of the Dardanelles,<sup>20</sup> to cover a 30-mile arc across the water. At this time they came under command of GOC Chanak (on Amalgamation they became RM Heavy Batteries).

The infantry companies did guard duties in Constantinople and in the defence of the neutral zone around the city. Their only casualty was a death from malaria<sup>21</sup> before sailing in August 1923 for the UK, where they were disbanded in September.

#### **12th Battalion**

This is another battalion which had its origins in a formation for the coal strike emergency.

Disturbances in China led to the formation of the Shanghai Defence Force and other measures that by mid-March 1927 involved 17, 700 troops<sup>1</sup> (10,000 of them British) to defend four times this number of foreigners in the city. The Admiralty offered a Marine battalion, available in a matter of days against the army's need of some weeks,<sup>2</sup> and on 14 January 1927 telegraphed orders were sent to all RM Divisions to mobilise the 12th RM Battalion of 1,000 all ranks commanded by Lt-Col G. Carpenter, OBE, DSC.<sup>3</sup> They were ready by 21 January but their old transport, SS *Minnesota*, had been laid up needing a good deal of preparation, and they could not embark until 26th January. The only wheeled transport taken was some horse-drawn field cookers.<sup>4</sup> (The Companies were originally numbered 1 to 4 but were apparently redesignated A to D by the summer of 1927.)

After a 28-day passage, the Battalion came under the army GHQ's direct command to provide guards, and from 21 March was in the Pootung district, covering almost a 5-mile front along the Whangpo River opposite the city. An area of factories, wharves and warehouses, where most communication was by boat. On 20 August 'C' Company<sup>5</sup> arrived at the British Cold Store in Nanking on a gruelling hot day, where they found the Southern Army's soldiers had briefly occupied the western compound, the most suitable for defence. After taking over from *Dauntless*, 21 volunteers stoked the boilers generating the power for the cold stores, as when the temperature was 32 C the cold rooms were needed to keep rations fresh. Nanking lies on the southern bank of a river bend, and was reoccupied by the Southern Army in 1927 without opposition on 3 September and for the next ten weeks the Marines were confined to the compound, before being relieved on 20–21 November by an army company.

The Battalion embarked on 6 December in SS *Mantua* after Chiang Kai-shek arrived and the tension had eased in Shanghai.

#### **13th RM (Reserve) Battalion**

Formed from reservists at the time of the 1920–1 strikes in the coalfields, which culminated in the national coal strike from 31 March to 1 July 1921, the Battalion provided detachments to protect installations and RN personnel manning pumps at mines. Disbanded within a year.

#### **14th Battalion**

This was another internal security battalion formed in 1921, but no details have been traced.

#### **RM Battalion for Public Duties (London Bn)**

Formed in July 1935 for carrying out these duties, from 17 August to 19 September, in conjunction with the 1st Battalion Scots Guards, this Battalion<sup>6</sup> was honoured as at that time few units other than the Brigade of Guards carried out ceremonial guards in London. The Battalion 281 strong, had a band and drums of 111 musicians. As the King was not in residence at Buckingham Palace, the King's guard was changed at St James's Palace. Guards were also mounted at the Hyde Park Magazine, the Central London Recruiting Depot and the Bank of England. The Battalion, exercising the RMs' right to march through London with bayonets fixed and colours flying, and marched through the City on 19 September. During the month some officers were called back to the MNBDO Nucleus in case gun-mounting parties might be required in the Abyssinian crisis, and Guards' officers in RM uniforms helped out.<sup>7</sup>

## INFANTRY UNITS 1939–46

### RM Division HQ

The background to the formation of the Division and its subsequent development are explained in Chapters 5; but, briefly, in August 1940 Maj General R. (Bob) G. Sturgess, a Brigadier at the time, was appointed to command the Division at the same as time as the formation of 103 Bde was approved that August.<sup>8</sup> On 23 September the intended order of battle<sup>9</sup> was the following: three brigades — which would become 101, 102 and 103 — each with an HQ, signals and two battalions; a battery of 6 x 3.7-in howitzers (presumably the 31st RM Light Bty); a mobile unit of motorcycles with some carriers and anti-tank weapons; a field ambulance and a Light Aid Detachment to be provided by the War Office; and army instructors for 'one engineer unit'. The War Office prepared the equipment authorisations (G1098s) for a unit with characteristics of great mobility 'but with great fire and assault powers',<sup>10</sup> capable of operating in temperate or semitropical climates.

During the early winter of 1940–41 101 and 102 Bdes were abroad, but on 21 February 1941<sup>11</sup> the Divisional HQ opened at Alresford (Hampshire); until this time the General, his DAQ and one clerk had been the only staff. The Division (except for 103 RM Bde and ancillary units still being trained) concentrated in Scotland, and in April 1941 was standing by for possible occupation of Grand Canary Island (see Chapter 3). It was mobilised on 30 April<sup>12</sup> before embarking in ships on the Clyde on 5 May for an exercise, the HQ moving to Inverary on 9 May. About this time responsibility for bringing the Division up to War Establishment was taken over by the staff of 103 Bde HQ.<sup>13</sup> During the rest of 1941 and 1942 several amphibious and other exercises were carried out, as part of Force 106 with 29 Bde and army support.

On 10 DECEMBER 1941<sup>14</sup> the General and part of the HQ staff had begun planning the ship loadings and operations for landings in Madagascar, and from this date there were in effect two HQs: one administering the division and the second planning for the Madagascar landings. The Chiefs of Staff decided early in 1942 to create what was called the Expeditionary Force of a division, an independent brigade group and the RM Division,<sup>15</sup> which — as noted above — was intended eventually to have three brigades. The Admiralty, however, only agreed to the RM Division being attached to the force, so the Division could maintain its own characteristics (see Chapter 5).

The division's supporting units — 15 RM (MG) Bn, the Anti-Tank Bty and 18 RM (Mobile) Bn — were reorganised, and 103 Bde given a low priority for personnel during the summer of 1942, when the Divisional Artillery HQ was raised in September. There was no available supply of guns and therefore — perhaps now obvious — difficulties in attaching army units to the RM Division, when considerable quantities of equipment had to be provided for the Alamein (Egypt) build-up, among other calls on the War Office's resources. The Divisional Artillery, nevertheless, included three HQs for field, anti-tank and regiments.<sup>16</sup> By late November proposals to employ 101 and 102 Bdes as brigade groups in North Africa had come to nothing (see chapter 5), and the Division continued to train for amphibious operations during 1943. The benefits of three years of this training would not be seen until after the summer of 1943, when its personnel were serving as commandos or in landing craft crews. The Special Service (later Commando) Group HQ opened under command of General Sturgess at the RM Division HQ on 15 August 1943 and a month later (15 September) the Division 'ceased to function', after its personnel had been transferred.

### RM Division Holding Unit

This unit was opened during 1942 and disbanded 12 October 1943 when its personnel had been transferred.

### The RM Brigade, later 101 RM Bde

Formed at Bisley (Surrey) in December 1939<sup>17</sup> with three battalions — 1st, 2nd and 3rd — under command of Brig A. St Clair Morford, MC, it was originally numbered as 1st RM Bde the number was changed to avoid confusion with army units and RM Bn, to 101 RM Bde. At the time 60 'HO' officers began training near Deal.<sup>18</sup> The Brigade 'was directly under the Chiefs of Staff Committee'<sup>19</sup> for a role that included seaborne raiding in the Mediterranean should Italy enter the war as expected. Naval gun and air support was expected, but no AFVs were included, as surprise would be lost 'owing to time required to hoist them into MLCs'.<sup>20</sup> Any raid would be limited, therefore, to 24 hours ashore, but plans were discussed with the ISTDC to improve the landing time required for vehicles. In January 1940 a fourth battalion, 5th RM Bn, was added, and the plan was dropped for including an army battalion when required operationally. The Brigade was split in two, as 101 and 102 RM Bdes before or during May 1940, although 102 Bde's HQ was not formally raised until 12 July, about this time (see RM Circ No. 1659/40S) an RM Bde Reinforcement Depot was established at Sunshine Camp, Hayling Island (see 20th RM Bn Unit History). Although 101 Bde had expected to complete training by July, events overtook these plans.

One of the few fully armed units in the UK that summer, 101 Bde had 66 officers and 1,350 other ranks<sup>21</sup> (an army brigade had 120 officers, 2,824 ORs and 396 vehicles).<sup>22</sup> The Brigade was temporarily attached to 55 Division for 'reinforcement or counter-attack of any island localities'<sup>23</sup> and as a reserve for action on the mainland. The Chiefs of Staff had agreed in mid-June that both 101 and 102 Bdes should be held at 6-hours' notice for despatch to Ireland<sup>24</sup> should any German invasion begin there, and for seizing the Azores and Cape Verde Islands. But the Brigades were released from their potential commitment for Ireland on 1 July.<sup>25</sup> Having been concentrated near Milford Haven (Dyfed) in late June with Bde HQ and Signals Coy at Tenby, later at Saundersfoot and on 30 June at Pembroke Dock. The Brigade moved early in July to take over 30 miles of coast defences just west of Plymouth, a convenient port for mounting an operation against islands in the Atlantic. The Brigade remained under Home Forces Command but was reduced to three battalions (1st, 2nd and 5th) about July 1940, and was joined by 8th Argylls on 17 July.<sup>26</sup> In August they embarked for Dakar (capital of Senegal, Senegambia) — see Chapter 3. On their return to the Clyde in October 1940, they were held in readiness, training for further operations in West Africa and then for possible landings in the Azores.<sup>27</sup> Although detailed for the December raid on the Lofoten Islands (North Norway), the Brigade was not sent, army commandos making the raid.<sup>28</sup> In April 1941 the 8th Argylls returned to army command.

During 1941–2 a number of operations were considered (see summary of RM Division history) but 101 Bde spent its time in amphibious and other exercises from its ships in Scotland. Brig A. N. Williams later succeeded Brig Morford. The Bde HQ moved to Ystrad Camp (South Wales) during July 1942. Here it developed amphibious techniques, such as employing engineers in the first flight of landing craft, the use of smoke from support craft, and the Beach Bn (see Unit history summary of Beach Units) showing lights to seaward indicating gaps in beach minefields and wire. The problems of clearing stores from beach dumps were realised. In November 1942 the

Brigade was back in Inverary (Argyll)<sup>29</sup> doing amphibious exercises, and by January 1943 was in the south of England, with Bde HQ at Chilworth Manor (nr Southampton). By this date the HQ had 161 all ranks,<sup>30</sup> with the Brigadier's command post in tracked carriers and the advanced brigade HQ all in vehicles. He rear HQ and B-echelon had nine vehicles, including the Light Aid Detachment's recovery truck, transport for cooks, signallers and half of the defence platoon, and five motorcycles. In May the Brigade moved to Cowes (Isle of Wight), taking the opportunity to practise landings, and in June and July was in Burley (Hampshire), where by September the HQ was reformed — see RM Circ 1282/43A3, dated 26 August — as part of 4 Special Service Bde's HQ.<sup>31</sup>

#### **102 RM Brigade**

Formed when the RM Brigade was divided into brigades each of two battalions, this was at first designated 2nd Brigade in about May 1940,<sup>1</sup> but in August the number was changed to avoid confusion with army units and RM Bn, to 102 RM Bde. It was commanded by Brig R. H. Campbell, who would later command the Division. His HQ had been formally opened on 16 July<sup>2</sup> at Plymouth and moved to Liverpool on 19 August<sup>3</sup> but part<sup>4</sup> only of the HQ appears to have sailed (with 101 Bde HQ) to Freetown, and this Brigade's 2nd and 3rd RM Bns remained in Freetown (West Africa) until February 1941, when they returned to the UK.<sup>5</sup> The Bde HQ continued to train its battalions until August 1943, when its HQ personnel became the HQ staff of 3 Special Service (Cdo) Brigade.<sup>6</sup>

#### **103 RM Brigade**

Formation was approved by Chiefs of Staff in August 1940<sup>7</sup> at the time the RM Division's formation was approved, two battalions — 7th RM Bn and 8th RM Bn — were to be raised at Exton, where the Brigade HQ opened 1 October 1940, but the following month recruits intended for the Battalions were re-allocated to MNBDO II. The HQ continued at Exton, with the Brigade Commander also Commandant of this Reserve Depot, and the battalions were each reduced to 200 all ranks. 7th RM Bn was moved to Hayling Island that December, as a training unit. The 103 Bde HQ was reactivated in April 1941<sup>8</sup> at Exton (CTC Barracks in 1997). It was commanded by Brig N. K. Jolley and its battalions — 7th and 8th — were drawn from recruits at this Reserve Depot,<sup>9</sup> also under command for some months were the 10th RM Bn (see unit history of 10th RM Bn), 31 Lt Bty, 15th RM Bn, 18th RM Bn, RM Division Reinforcement Depot (see 20th RM Bn Unit History) and 1st RM Bn (for administration only). In April the 7th RM Bn came back to Devon, being under canvas at Dalditch. The Brigade took over responsibility for training reinforcements on 2 May 1941<sup>10</sup> and Brig Jolley commanded the Exton Depot until the end of December, when again many men from the battalions were drafted to make up the establishment of MNBDOs.<sup>11</sup>

The 103 RM Bde was rejoined by the 10th Bn on 21 January 1942 before it moved to Dalditch on 27–29 January, when RM brigades of three battalions were planned. But in May 1942 '103 Bde was again reduced to a low priority'.<sup>12</sup> The Brigade HQ's training responsibilities passed to 104 RM (Training) Brigade on 17 June and 103 Bde's HQ was disbanded on 16 July 1942.

#### **104 RM (Training) Brigade**

Formed before the summer of 1942<sup>13</sup> as the training brigade of the RM Division, this HQ's responsibilities included the organisation of NCOs' and other courses at Hayling Island, its 20th (Training) Battalion being responsible for recruits' infantry training. (See Administrative Instruction No. 7 for details of formation and unit signs.) From April to mid-July 1942 the HQ was in Exmouth.<sup>15</sup> The Brigade took over responsibility for training at Lypstone and the infantry training of recruits at Dalditch from 17 June 1942, the HQ moving into Lypstone Grange on 16 July. They also liaised with battalions over the provision of reinforcements, including officers for battalions when mobilised.<sup>16</sup> The 22nd RM (Trg) Bn of young soldiers came under commands of this HQ in November 1942, before the HQ was absorbed by RM Training Group on its formation early in 1943.

#### **116 Infantry Brigade RM**

Originally intended to command beach battalions in the Far East, the Brigade was formed during January 1945 on an army war establishment under command of Brig C. F. Phillips, with three battalions — 27th RM, 28th RM and 30th RM — a brigade defence platoon, signals section and provost section of RM personnel and an army unarmoured Light Aid Detachment Type 'A'. Within eight weeks the Brigade was in Belgium and its battalions in action in North West Europe during the last three months of World War II. They returned to the UK at the end of June 1945, and this HQ took under command some personnel from 117 Bde RM, 5 RM AA Bde and 33rd RM Bn during November 1945 as units were run down on demobilisation. The personnel of this HQ were redeployed about January 1946.

#### **117 Infantry Brigade RM**

HQ formed 16 January 1945 in Kent on an army war establishment under command of Brig W. I. Nonweiler, with three battalions — 31st RM, 32nd RM and 33rd RM — and Brigade troops which were similar to those of 116 Bde RM. After further training on the Lancashire coast, the Brigade HQ moved to Germany during mid-May 1945, and from 18 May to 27 June was under naval command in Keil. It returned to the UK on 1 July 1945 and was disbanded on 31 August.

#### **1st RM Battalion**

Formed about January 1940 at Bisley (Surrey),<sup>17</sup> commanded by Lt-Col Wildman-Lushington as part of the RM Bde, with four rifle companies and an HQ Coy (cp: 2nd Bn). In June 1940 it was based at Haverfordwest (south Wales), training for amphibious operations in the summer of 1940 and was in the UK defence forces. In August it took part in amphibious exercises based on the Clyde from the transport *Etteric*,<sup>18</sup> in which it sailed to Freetown on 31 August. The Battalion was in the transport off Dakar on 23–5 September 1940, but did not land and returned to Freetown before sailing to the UK in October. During the next 2½ years the battalion carried out many exercises, while stationed in Scotland from 27 October 1940 to 8 October 1942 standing by for raids on the Atlantic islands, and moved with the Brigade to various training areas for exercises. These included night infiltration, street fighting and a landing from LSIs when moving to Newport (Isle of Wight) on 19–20 April 1943.<sup>19</sup> Lt-Col B. W. Leicester took command during 1942. At the end of July 1943 the Battalion was re-formed as 42 RM Commando, but some men went to minor landing craft flotillas and other duties.

#### **2nd RM Battalion**

HQ began forming about December 1939<sup>1</sup> as part of RM Brigade, but the first recruits did not join until April 1940<sup>2</sup> at Bisley (Surrey). Commanded by Lt-Col A. N. Williams, the continuous service officers and NCOs of the Battalion HQ, its four rifle companies, and the HQ Company, had been training the largely 'HO' recruits in infantry tactics for about three weeks before 3 May.<sup>3</sup> On that day they were put at 2-hours notice for overseas service. Bren guns, anti-tank rifles and 2-in mortars began to arrive next day, to equip the Battalion to its war establishment. Three days later they were aboard the cruisers HMS *Glasgow* and *Berwick*, sailing as part of Force Sturges to Iceland, where they landed on 10 May.<sup>4</sup> During the passage the new weapons had been zeroed (their sights tested for accuracy by firing a number of rounds) despite the rough weather. The strength of the Battalion at this time was 28 officers and 280 men.<sup>5</sup>

Although the Battalion had a large area to cover, 'A' Coy's OC prevented the German Consul burning important documents, as the Marines had brought some fire extinguishers ashore.<sup>6</sup> The HQ Coy's Fire Power Platoon, to which most of the Brens<sup>7</sup> had been issued, was sent to Kaldarnes, where planes carrying 2,000 German troops might land. The orders to the Platoon were: to hold their fire until troop-carrying planes landed; to fire at paratroops in the air; and should any Germans be caught not in uniform after parachuting in, they were to be shot.<sup>8</sup> (See also Force Sturges's in Unit History Summaries.)

After returning to UK in late May, the Battalion became part of 102 RM Bde.<sup>9</sup> In mid-June 1940 it was in Pembroke (Dyfed). It was sent to Freetown (West Africa) in the transport *Kenya* for the Dakar operation, and remained in Freetown for possible operations against the Cape Verde islands before returning to the UK in February 1941. During the next 30 months the Battalion took part in various training exercises, being stationed in Scotland.<sup>10</sup> In August 1943 the Battalion HQ and most of the Marines were re-formed as 43 RM Commando.<sup>11</sup>

### 3rd RM Battalion

HQ formed in December 1939<sup>12</sup> under Lt-Col E. T. Harden as part of RM Bde, and sometimes styled as 3rd (Plymouth) Bn RM. The first recruits joined the Battalion in February 1940, during May the Battalion was transferred to 102 RM Bde and in June was stationed at Manorbier (south Wales). In August it sailed to Freetown in the transport *Sobieski*, with 'A' Coy in *Etteric*. The Battalion remained in Freetown with the 2nd RM Bn (see above) after the Dakar operation.<sup>13</sup> Returning to the UK in February 1941, it went to Scotland and elsewhere in the UK, taking part in many training exercises during the next 30 months. In August 1943 the Battalion and its HQ were re-formed as 44 RM Commando<sup>14</sup> but some personnel went to other units.

### 4th RM Battalion

Not formed in World War II, see history summary of Land Units 1919–38 above.

### 5th RM Battalion

Formed 2 April 1940<sup>15</sup> at Cowshot Camp (Brookwood) Hampshire, commanded by Lt-Col H. E. Reading. The Battalion was part of 101 RM Bde. An advanced party went to Hayling Island in preparation for boat training, but the Battalion began to move to Tenby (South Wales) on 19 June. In August it embarked in the transport *Karanja* for the Dakar operations and sailed to Freetown.<sup>16</sup> It returned to Scotland in late October, where it carried out exercises until June 1942. In February that year Lt-Col S. G. Cutler<sup>17</sup> became CO and the Battalion moved to Ystrad (South Wales) on 8–9 June, and on 2 September Lt-Col K. Hunt took command. Some companies returned to Scotland for amphibious training in November/December. These companies and those in South Wales were assembled at Hursley (Hampshire) from 12 December 1942,<sup>18</sup> moved to Ryde (Isle of Wight) in April 1943 and to Burley (Hampshire) on 29 May. Disbanded at Burley early in August 1943, the HQ and most of the personnel were re-formed as 45 RM Commando.

### 6th RM Battalion

Not formed in World War II

### 7th RM Battalion

HQ formed during April 1941,<sup>19</sup> CO Lt-Col T. B. W. Sandall, for service with 103 RM Bde. The first three Continuous Service squads joined at Exton about 23 September 1940 and 'HO' squads allocated to 7th RM began training in October. Then 300 men were drafted to MNBDO, and to make more accommodation available at Exton, the remainder went to Sands Camp (Hayling Island), which was taken over by the Battalion's HQ with two recruit squads on 8 February 1941. At Hayling it became a training unit. It moved back to Devon, arriving at a tented camp at Dalditch in April. On 2 May the CO, Col Sandall, also took command of the 8th RM and 9th RM Battalions — total strength of all three battalions was 28 officers and 797 other ranks.<sup>20</sup> The Battalion was rebuilt after the drafts to MNBDO, although 103 RM Bde was given a low priority from May, when the Battalion apparently became independent.

In June 1942 Lt-Col F. W. Dewhurst<sup>21</sup> was appointed CO before the Battalion moved to the Treglog area in Wales before embarking in September 1942 for South Africa; on passage (in HMT *Empress of Russia*) the Marines manned the ship's guns and helped with the work in other departments. On arrival in Durban the Battalion spent five weeks in a transit camp, their intended role of guarding naval stores dumps having been cancelled on political grounds. In December the Battalion sailed to Egypt in SS *Arona*, landing at Suez on 1 January 1943, and went to Kabrit Camp north of Little Bitter Lake. The Battalion developed a Beach Brick in the following months, for landing men and stores over open beaches (see Chapter 5). On 27 March the Battalion came under command of GHQ Middle East and under Force 545 (later part of Eighth Army). Final training as '31 Brick' was carried out at Fayid (Egypt) from 25 May 1943 when for a time the battalion was under command of MNBDO II.

The Battalion landed in Sicily at Marzamemi (see chapter 5). On D+6 (16 July 1943) the Battalion was warned for operations under the direct command of XXX Corps in the area of Buccheri, some 70 miles from the Battalion's beach area. On arriving at this hill town next evening (17 July), the CO and his staff undertook the various steps to restore the town's civil administration, the battalion being deployed to guard bridges. But 48 hours later it moved off to secure a bridgehead across the Dittaino River (see chapter 5).

Maj J. T. O. Waters the second in command, took command of the Battalion in action on 30 July, before it was relieved on 7 August and moved to Augusta where it again came under the command of MNBDO II. The Royal Marine Office in London considered the Battalion to be under command of MNBDO II from late June 1943, and briefly

before then, but the Battalion's CO did not hear of this until 30 July, and the Battalion had been operating as Corps Troops for some weeks.<sup>22</sup> Lt-Col K. Hunt was appointed CO on 10 August. During the autumn the Battalion carried out guard and other duties, and was embarked several days for an operation that was cancelled at the end of September. The Battalion arrived at Toranto (southern Italy) on 27 November and did routine training and guard duties before sailing for the UK in February 1944. The Battalion was re-formed as 48 Commando soon after its arrival in the UK, and the Battalion was formerly disbanded on 16 March.

#### **8th RM Battalion**

HQ forming in April 1941,<sup>1</sup> CO Lt-Col S. G. B. Paine, and the first recruits joined from initial training at Exton, where the Battalion was being formed as part of 103 RM Bde, in the autumn of 1941.<sup>1</sup> In December men were drafted from the Battalion to the MNBDOs and the Battalion HQ moved to open the OCTU at Thurlestone (Devon). The Battalion re-forming at Dalditch, came under command of the CO of 7th RM Bn from 2 May 1942. When the need arose for a second RM Commando in the autumn of 1942, the Battalion HQ and most of the other ranks were transferred to 41 RM Commando, the Battalion formerly disbanding on 29 October 1942.

#### **9th RM Battalion**

Formed about January 1942<sup>4</sup> as part of 103 RM Bde. On 2 May came under command of CO of 7th RM while training at Dalditch, and after further training re-formed in August 1943 as 46 RM Commando.

#### **10th RM Battalion**

Formed at Crookston (Glasgow) on 18 April 1941,<sup>5</sup> CO Lt-Col F. M. Bramall (promoted from Major 25 April) with personnel from 2nd RM Bn, 3rd RM Bn and 5th RM Bn, and drafts from Divisional reserves on 2 May, as the third battalion of 103 RM Bde.<sup>6</sup> Within a week most of the men from the 3rd RM Bn were redrafted to that Battalion. The Battalion HQ moved to Paisley (Scotland) on 17 May, and two months later was in Dalditch Camp. Here in July/August the Battalion lived under canvas until moving to Fishguard (Wales) on 20 August 1941. By 29 January 1942 they returned to Dalditch, their strength at time being 660.<sup>7</sup> From Dalditch they went on an amphibious exercise on Loch Fyne (Scotland) for four days in March 1942. Lt-Col C. N. S. Smith was appointed CO on 15 May, and Nos 1 and 2 Anti-Tank Btys and 31st Light Bty were attached for discipline while at Dalditch. The Battalion was to move to Hayling Island as beach engineers<sup>8</sup> but in June moved to Tenby (Dyfed) and on 2 December 1942 moved to Freshwater (Isle of Wight). The next move to Hursley (nr Winchester) was use on 7 April 1943 'to practise naval cooperation in a movement'.<sup>9</sup> The Battalion was re-formed as 47 RM Commando in August 1943.

#### **11th RM Battalion (formerly Land Defence Force)**

Formed as Land Defence Force of MNBDO (later MNBDO I) with cadres of all ranks at Fort Cumberland in February 1940,<sup>10</sup> CO Maj G. W. M. Grover. In March moved to Plymouth, in May to Hayling Island and in June — CO Col R. Sturges — deployed in defence of Deal (Subarea A6 of Home Command).<sup>11</sup> In accordance with RM Circe 5078/408, 13 June 1940, became 11th RM Bn. In September 20 machine-gunners joined the Battalion after training at Browdown.<sup>12</sup>

The Battalion embarked in early February 1941<sup>13</sup> and sailed for Egypt. (See MNBDO I history summary). In Egypt during the summer of 1941, the Battalion was often misused in doing fatigues for the army, until August. In about this month the Battalion was attached to C-in-C Mediterranean's command 'to be used as required',<sup>14</sup> as MNBDO I was rebuilding after Crete, the unit was an independent Battalion for all practical purposes. On 15–16 April 1942 a 100 all ranks led by Col Unwin raided Kupho Nisis island near Crete. Although used 'mostly as a training raid',<sup>15</sup> the raiders successfully got ashore to destroy enemy installations (see chapter 4).

The Battalion's first major operation was a raid of 13–15 September on Tobruk (see chapter 4). Here it suffered heavy losses with Lt-Col Unwin and 17 officers, including the MO, and 200 other ranks missing after the raid. Subsequently a number were reported as prisoners-of-war, including QMS R. (Reg) W. Beasant, aged 47, though the majority were 20-year-olds.<sup>16</sup> After this action the Battalion was rebuilt and by January 1942 had a strength of 27 officers, 27 senior NCOs and 371 other ranks.<sup>17</sup>

The Battalion was in Ceylon and India in 1942–3 on various duties until it returned to the UK. It was disbanded in June 1944. (Elements reportedly remained in India until October 1944)

#### **12th RM Battalion**

Formed in the UK in 1941<sup>18</sup> as the Auxiliary Bn and later designated the 12th Battalion as the Land Defence Force of MNBDO II. Disbanded in the summer of 1942.

#### **13th RM Battalion**

Not formed in World War II

#### **14th RM Battalion**

Intended to replace the 8th Argylls in RM Division but not raised.

#### **15th RM Bn and Machine Gun Companies**

Early in 1940 plans were being made to provide support units for the RM Division<sup>19</sup> and in May 1940 the first draft of 62 recruits left Exton for the MG Companies.<sup>20</sup> These were apparently to serve with each RM Battalion and in the Land Defence Forces (11th and 12th Bns). During December there was a reorganisation proposed, the MG Companies (except those with Land Defence Forces) forming the 15th RM MG Bn with an HQ formed in March 1941 at Hayling Island; the Battalion had an HQ Coy and Nos 1, 2, and 3 MG Coys. Further drafts did not join until October 1941 and in January and March 1942. In all over 430<sup>21</sup> recruits were drafted to the Battalion from the Depot for training in Wales.

In the summer of 1942 the Battalion moved to Dalditch for combined training with infantry battalions, the main party arriving on 3 July.<sup>22</sup> Later the Battalion was reorganised into three independent companies,<sup>23</sup> to serve with the Brigade Groups formed for possible operations in North Africa. Although the formation of a Support Battalion for each Brigade was suggested early in 1942, this was not accepted by the Chiefs of Staff.<sup>25</sup> But from December 1942 the Battalion CO was appointed adviser to the Divisional GOC on tactical handling of MG Coys.<sup>24</sup> Although the formation

of a Support Battalion for each Brigade was again considered in 1942, this was not accepted by the Chiefs of Staff.<sup>25</sup> In August/September 1943 the Battalion was disbanded,<sup>26</sup> many of the men being posted to the gun crews of support landing craft.

#### **16th and 17th RM Battalions**

Not formed in World War II, as ordinals earmarked for Support Battalions of 102 and 103 RM Brigades (see RMOs).

#### **18th RM (Mobile) Battalion and Mobile Companies**

Formed in January 1940<sup>1</sup> as the Mobile Coy of the RM Brigade, to be under command of Brigade HQ for reconnaissance, and in June 1940 was in south Wales. The unit was expanded into several Mobile Companies to serve with each RM Battalion in the division. A Mobile Coy had a few tracked carriers and motorcycle combinations with an anti-tank rifle and/or Maxim guns to be replaced by Brens when these became available.<sup>2</sup> By December 1940 the companies had been formed into the 18th RM (Mobile) Battalion, and the ratio of carriers to motorcycles was to be reduced. In March 1941 the Army Reconnaissance Training Centre agreed to help with the training of Mobile Companies,<sup>3</sup> and on 2 May 1941 the Battalion came under command of 103 RM Bde for training.<sup>4</sup> The Battalion had moved from south Wales, where it had been training in radio communications, to Dalditch in April 1941.

By early 1943 it was also equipped with Scout cars. After the RM Division was disbanded, there was apparently some possibility of employing the Battalion with other formations, but it was disbanded about August 1944.<sup>5</sup>

#### **19th RM Battalion and RM Companies at Scapa Flow**

When this naval base was expanded in 1940, 'W' Company (MNBDO) of 211 Marines — mostly tradesmen, including National Servicemen — arrived on Hoy (9 March)<sup>6</sup> and were followed by 'D' Coy on 25 April. The companies had been known as the Labour Battalion but this was changed to Auxiliary Battalion in April and in September 1942 changed again to 19th RM Battalion.<sup>7</sup> By June 1940 five companies had been living in tents in Lyness (Hoy), and by October 1943 had completed much of the civil engineering work,<sup>8</sup> including: drainage at Hoy and Flotta; roads; canteens; Mill Bay naval camp; the storage wharf with piers at Rinnigill; and a weather station for the RAF. In April 1940 they had also built, in only eight weeks, the seaplane slipway at Balta Sound in the Shetlands, and they helped to build and guard (from 1940 to 1942), the FAA base at Twatt. They also provided stevedores for unloading ships, with officers experienced in cargo handling, their men loading and discharging some 2,000 tons of stores and ammunition a week from 1940 to 1945.

When the civil engineering work passed to RM Engineer units in autumn of 1942, 19th RM Battalion was reduced to three companies. The others were redeployed with 'X' company becoming No. 3 Coy of Landing and Maintenance Unit of MNBDO II with effect from 1 October 1942. 'W' Company became No. 2 Coy of the Landing and Maintenance Unit of MNBDO I in November 1942. In December 'Y' Company was reformed as RM Boom Defence Scaffolding Unit.<sup>10</sup> The companies at Scapa were then 'A' Coy of 122 all ranks for administration, 'B' Company of 235 all ranks for guards and escorts; and 'C' Coy of 128 stevedores with 12 transport drivers who also worked as stevedores.

The Battalion was formally disbanded on 15 July 1943, but certain personnel, including the stevedores presumably, were absorbed into the complement of HMS *Prosperine* the Scapa depot. But some contact was maintained with Fort Cumberland for administrative purposes, until the Scapa Base contracted in 1945.

#### **20th (Training) Battalion, formerly RM Division Reinforcement Depot**

Early in 1940 a Reinforcement Depot for the RM Division was formed at Sunshine Camp, Hayling Island,<sup>11</sup> to give reinforcements their boat and other training, including landing exercises, for which companies were sent to Scotland. The first Marines had joined the Depot in April 1940,<sup>12</sup> and on 16 January 1942 it was redesignated 20th RM Training Battalion, commanded by Lt-Col F. B. Pym. In June 1942, when the Sunshine Camp was taken over for LC crews' training, the Battalion moved to Dalditch under command of 104 RM (Training) Bde. The staff trained recruit companies here until late October 1942, when the Battalion was merged with 21st RM Holding Battalion to form the Infantry training Centre.

#### **21st RM Holding Battalion**

Formed early in 1942 to absorb men who could not be posted to operational units after training, this battalion provided camp staff for 20th RM Bn before they were merged in October 1942.<sup>13</sup>

#### **22nd (Training) Battalion**

Formed in November 1942, CO Lt-Col D. A. C. Shephard, when government prohibited men under 19 joining operational units. From these young trained Marines — 218 joined on 26 November 1942 — the Battalion trained its own junior NCOs and by the summer of 1943 there were several companies. In the summer of 1944 the Battalion moved to Towyn (north Wales), merging in October with the 23rd RM (Training) Bn to become part of RMTG Wales.

### **23rd RM Battalion**

Formed in April 1943<sup>14</sup> at Dalditch as part of 104 RM Trg Bde, the battalion moved to Towyn in the summer of 1944, and it was merged<sup>15</sup> in October with 22nd RM Bn.

### **24th RM Battalion**

HQ of this Battalion<sup>16</sup> was forming in late July 1943 in Ceylon and drew men mainly from MNBDO I, with a nucleus from 'R' Searchlight Bty, but the Battalion was never brought to full strength<sup>17</sup> before returning to the UK and was disbanded 15 May 1944.

### **25th RM Battalion**

Was formed at Dalditch, CO Lt-Col T. W. B. Sandall and was disbanded on 24 August 1944.

**26th RM Battalion** In the summer of 1944 the damage caused by German V1 'flying bombs' and by V2 rockets was considerable, many houses being damaged in London and its suburbs. The Admiralty was approached by the Ministry for Reconstruction, and to provide help with building repairs this 26th RM Battalion was raised at Lower Sydenham (London) in July 1944,<sup>18</sup> the battalion HQ opening on 10 July, CO Lt-Col R. E. S. Jeffries.

Organised in 15 Platoons (16 by 1 August<sup>19</sup>) of about 30 men each, the repair squads 'followed the bangs' and during the next few months patched-up 6,720 houses, made permanent repairs to 1,414 buildings and even built a few houses from their foundations. Three men had been killed by bombs before the Battalion was to be disbanded on 14 March 1944; but after the Ministry had asked for its continuance, 250 men were replaced by those in low medical categories.<sup>20</sup> The Battalion continued its building repair work, covering sites as far apart as Esher, Kew, Ilford and Orpington, until it was disbanded early in 1946.<sup>21</sup>

### **27th RM Battalion**

The Battalion was one of several raised from cadres of former LC crews and recruits, as Beach Battalions for service in the Far East and on a war establishment appropriate to troops in a light division.<sup>1</sup> Formed at Dalditch on 24 August 1944,<sup>2</sup> CO Lt-Col P. W. O'H. Phibbs, the Battalion was trained in Scotland during December. On 4 January 1945<sup>3</sup> the Battalion came under command of 116 Infantry Bde RM for service as infantry and the war establishment was changed to that for an army rifle battalion. Lt-Col N. H. Tailyour was appointed CO on 8 January 1945.

On 12 April the Battalion was detached from the Brigade, and under US Army command, prepared for the assault on Bremerhaven (Lower Saxony), but about the 26 April the Battalion was switched to the command of 4 Canadian Armoured Division for the assault on Wilhelmshaven further west (see chapter 7). Later 'A' Coy was detached to take the surrender of ships in Emden, 'B' Coy went to Sengwarden where it 'chaperoned' naval personnel in that former German HQ, and the Battalion Anti-Tank Platoon was billeted in Wilhelmshaven Dockyard. In taking the surrender of ships' crews, the Poles of *Conrad* (formerly HMS *Danae*) assisted the Marines.

The Battalion returned to the UK on 27-8 June<sup>4</sup> (see 116 RM Bde history summary), and provided parties that autumn to work on farms while based at Beacon Hill Camp (nr Falmouth).<sup>5</sup> On 27 November it moved to Chedworth (nr Cheltenham), before becoming a training battalion at Windrush Camp (west of Burford, Oxfordshire) early in 1946 and absorbing the 33rd RM Bn. On 1 April the Battalion became the training cadre at the Infantry School RM, Bickleigh (RMRO 323).

### **28th RM Battalion**

The Battalion HQ was forming at Dalditch in August 1944,<sup>7</sup> CO Lt-Col J. M. Fuller.<sup>8</sup> During the early winter the men who had served in the 1st Armoured Support Rgt were drafted to the Battalion.<sup>9</sup> They moved to Scotland on 8-9 December, where the Battalion trained as the nucleus for a Beach Group.<sup>10</sup> But on 4 January the Battalion came under command of 116 Infantry Bde RM and its original war establishment was changed to that for an army battalion (see 116 RM Bde history summary). After service on the Maas the Battalion continued under army command (see chapter 7).

It returned to the UK in June 1945, and was stationed in August at Okehampton (Devon)<sup>11</sup> in the late summer of 1945. From here it took part in internal security duties, quelling riots in a Polish naval camp. It was later briefly stationed in Plymouth and St Germans (Cornwall), where it provided parties for farm work. In November it was in South Brent (Devon), there it absorbed men from the 30th RM Bn.<sup>12</sup> In rationalisation as demobilisation continued, the Battalion moved to Windrush Camp (see 27th RM Bn history summary) and was disbanded on 21 January 1946,<sup>13</sup> the men being transferred to 27th RM Bn.

### **29th RM Battalion**

When the Armoured Support Group was disbanded after returning from France in 1944, many of its personnel were transferred to this Battalion which was formed on 3 October 1944 at Burma Camp in Llwyngwrl (North Wales). On 1 March 1945 practically all its personnel were drafted to form the 34th Amphibian Assault Rgt RM.<sup>14</sup> However, the Battalion HQ was not disbanded until February 1946.<sup>15</sup>

### **30th RM Battalion**

Formed at Dalditch on 15 January 1955,<sup>16</sup> CO Lt-Col T. K. Walker, mainly from former crews of LCs, the Battalion was under command of 116 RM Infantry Bde, and after a brief shakedown in Yorkshire went to France with the Brigade in late February 1945 (see 116 RM Bde history summary). The battalion HQ was disbanded at Topsham (nr Exeter) on 7 November 1945,<sup>17</sup> the personnel leaving Stoke Gabriel on 27 November for South Brent, where they merged with 28th RM Bn.

### **31st, 32nd and 33rd RM Battalions**

These Battalions of 117 RM Bde were formed at Deal late in January 1945. The 33rd RM Battalion was flown to Germany to assist 116 RM Bde in accepting surrender of the German fleet, and had some casualties. The 31st and 32nd RM Battalions joined the 33rd in the second week of May 1945. They carried out security duties in the Kiel area until returning to the UK in July 1945, and the 31st and 32nd were disbanded shortly afterwards; the 33rd absorbed some men from the other Battalions before itself being disbanded at Towyn on 7 October 1945.

### **Other Infantry Units**

*60th Reinforcement Holding Unit:*<sup>18</sup> formed in spring of 1945; mobilised (under Army command) at Aldershot in May before going to NW Europe. Reverted to RM command on return to UK 1 June 1945 and disbanded shortly afterwards. Some Royal Marines for this unit who were under training with the Army in UK that June, also reverted to RM command.

*RM Base Defence Unit:*<sup>19</sup> formerly 'Y' Company, formed in 1940 for ground defence of naval bases. (See also Boom Defence Scaffolding Unit.)

*Plymouth–Argylls Battalion:*<sup>20</sup> formed in Singapore on 29 January 1942 with 'A' and 'B' from men of 2nd A & SH, 'C' Company of mainly Marines from *Prince of Wales*, and 'D' Company from *Repulse*. In action 8–15 February before Singapore troops ordered to cease fire (see chap 4).

*Defence Force RN Air Stations:* from 1940, and before then in the case of specific stations, RM units were formed to provide the ground defences of naval air stations, and were organised in companies and platoons.<sup>21</sup>

## **COMMANDOS 1942–97**

### **Special Service (SS)/Commando Group**

#### *Origin and titles:*

Before 15 August 1943, when Commandos were not detached to field commands, they were under command of a single SS Brigade. SS Group under command of General Sturgess (GOC SS Group) was formed to take over this single Brigade's responsibilities with four new SS Brigades. The Group's HQ was opened on 15 August 1943, at the RM Division's HQ at Milford-on-Sea (nr Lymington), with the Divisional staff and some army personnel forming the SS Group's Headquarters. In November 1944 the titles of this Group and its Brigades were changed from SS — which was associated in the public's mind with Nazi Storm Troops — to Commando, although some weeks passed before all the units overseas used these new titles (see RMRO 11 December 1944). In August 1945 the suffix '(Light)' was added to these titles on the reorganisation of Army War Establishments.<sup>1</sup> The Group was commanded by General Wildman-Lushington (May 1945) and by 1946 by General Campbell Hardy.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Examples of Orders of battle:*

September 1943 — 1st SS Bde, 3 Special Service and 4 SS Brigades, Holding Operational Commando at Wrexham, 2nd Echelon (RM personnel) and 43 RM Cdo (other units which would form 2SS Bde were under army commands in the Middle East), 30th Assault Unit, Commando Basic Training Centre at Achnacarry, Commando Mountain Warfare Training Centre at St Ives, the RM Engineer Commando, Small Scale Raiding Force (COPPs, SBS, RMPBD, etc.) Field Provost and Administrative Sections.<sup>3</sup> The Field Security Section and the Postal Unit of the Division had been transferred to the Group.

April 1946 — Commando Training Unit RM, Commando Holding Unit RM, Commando basic Training Unit RM (for recruit), Commando Mountain Warfare Training Centre RM at St Ives, Commando Group 2nd Echelon, service Sections including Repair Section; and a nucleus for re-forming 41 RM or another Commando.

#### *Locations etc:*

After moving from Milford-on-Sea, the Group HQ had several bases in the London area, including Hatch End (Middlesex) in September 1943. In the summer of 1944 it was in Petworth (Sussex); on 15 March 1946 the Group's staff merged with HQ Training Group Wales to form a new Commando Group HQ at Towyn, North Wales.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Tactical HQ:*

Commanded by the Group's Deputy Commander (an army brigadier) and formed for planning with General Eisenhower's staff, this HQ landed in France on 7 June 1944, and remained in NW Europe until mid-1945.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Administration in World War II:*

The group's GOC kept in touch with his COs by visits and frequently by private correspondence.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Disbandment:*

When commando training moved from North Wales to Bickleigh (in RM's Plymouth Group) in 1947, the HQ was in Plymouth and closed on 8 August 1947.<sup>7</sup>

### **Commando Training Centres since 1947**

The training of commandos continued at Bickleigh until 1954 under the staff of the Commando School and then under a cadre of 42 RM Commando except when this Commando was re-mobilised. In 1960 all commando training was concentrated at Lypstone (at one time known as Exton) in Devon. By 1969 it was part of the Training Group RM.<sup>8</sup> On 24 August 1970 Lypstone was redesignated the Commando Training Centre, its name in 1997 as CTC RM Barracks.

In 1997 the Centre ran 30-week courses for commando training. It trains some 60 officers each year in the Officers' Training Wing; about 400 NCOs pass each year through various courses in the NCOs Training Wing. The Infantry Support Wing trained officers and men as instructors in specialist equipment. About 500 students attended courses for signallers and clerks in the Signals and Clerks Training Wing.

In the 1990s CTC was a Brigadier's command with some 900 instructors and other staff. (For history of the CTC Barracks see RM Bases, Depots and Training Establishments.)

### **HQ Commando Forces RM**

After world War II the Major General RM Plymouth commanded all Commandos in the UK when these units were not detached to army or navy commands. On 31 October 1969 Plymouth Group was redesignated Commando Forces; and when 3 Commando Bde returned to the UK, it came into this command. In 1980 the Bde HQ and all operational Commando Units formed part of Commando Forces. The HQ provided personnel for the HQ of the reinforced 3 Cdo

Bde and for General Moore's Division in the Falklands operation 'Corporate'. It remained based in Plymouth during the late 1980s and early-1990s. In April/June 1991 deployed to Iraq for operation 'Haven'.

In March 1993 this Headquarters was closed and its functions taken over by personnel of HQRM as from 1 April 1993.

*Miscellaneous*

Memorable date for HQ Cdo Forces was 14 June recapture of the Falkland Islands (in 1982).

### **1st SS/Commando Brigade**

*General history:*

Formed in November 1943, CO army Brig the Lord Lovat, DSO, MC, with 3, 4, 6 Army and 45 RM Commandos, its ordinal '1st' signifying its association with officers and men from the Brigade of Guards who served in the 1st Cdo Brigade. Landed in Normandy and after 83 days was withdrawn to the UK from France. Although intended to move to the Far East, it returned to Europe in January 1945 with 3 (Army), 6 (Army), 45 RM and 46 RM Commandos under command. The Brigade was in action in penetrating the Siegfried line, crossing the rivers Rhine, Weser, Aller and Elbe. Early in May 1945 the Brigade was on the Baltic coast and later returned to the UK to be disbanded early in 1946.<sup>9</sup>

### **2 SS/Commando Brigade**

*General History:*

Formed from the Commandos in Italy on 23 October 1943<sup>10</sup>, CO army Brig T. B. L. Churchill with 2 (Army), 9 (Army), 40 RM and 43 RM Commandos. Units of this Brigade served in Italy, the Dalmatian Islands, Albania and Greece. The staff of its HQ provided a Brigade base at Molfetta (southern Italy) and Tactical HQs for operations with units detached to other formations. During the summer of 1944 they formed the garrison HQ on Vis with several thousand Allied troops to administer; the main HQ landed on Vis 5 March 1944 and returned to Italy on 13 August. It planned operations that autumn and sent a Tactical HQ to Albania.<sup>11</sup> In the spring of 1945 the HQ moved to Ravenna and elements worked with the Brigade's Commandos, which were all detached to Army commands during operations in April and May. Sailed for UK on 19 June. 43 RM Cdo absorbed into 40 RM Cdo as The RM Cdo of 2 Cdo Bde and 2 (Army) melded with 9 (Army) Cdo as The Army Commando of 2 Cdo Bde, disbanded in September.<sup>12</sup>

### **3 SS/Commando Brigade — see also sub-units 1981 etc**

*Origin and titles:*

Formed 1 September 1943 at Dorchester with personnel of 102 RM Brigade HQ,<sup>13</sup> CO Brig Nonweiler until 26 November 1944, Brig Campbell Hardy December 1944 to October 1945. Title changes as for SS Group but by October 1946<sup>14</sup> the Commandos were all RM units, with some army personnel serving in the Brigade.

The Brigade passed to the operational command of C-in-C India on 23 November 1943<sup>15</sup> and remained overseas until 1971.

*Examples of Orders of Battle:*

In August 1943 the RM Office had expected 3 Command Bde to include 42, 43 and 44 RM Cdos.

January 1945 — 1 (Army), 5(Army), 42 RM and 44 RM, Brigade Signals Troop, LAD Type A (for vehicle maintenance) with 'C' Squadron 19th Lancers of Indian Army.

January 1946 — combined 1/5 (Army) Commando, 42 RM Cdo and 44 RM Cdo, with some Army subunits attached.

October 1946 — 42 RM Cdo, 44 RM Cdo and 45 RM Cdo, with some Army subunits attached.

April 1961 — 40 RM Cdo and 45 RM Cdo with some army subunits attached.

During the decades since 1961 various Commandos have been detached to other commands from time to time but when not detached: all RM Commandos were under the Brigade's command.

April 1982 — see appendix 2.

December 1997 — 40 Cdo RM, 42 Cdo RM, 45 Cdo RM, RM Stonehouse (barracks staff and instructors HQ Plymouth Garrison MR), 29 Cdo Rgt RA, 20 Cdo Bty RA, Cdo Logistic Rgt RM, 59 Independent Cdo Sqn RE, HQ & Signals Sqn RM, Patrol Troop and 539 Assault Sqn RM.

The Brigade became a part of the Rapid Reaction Force created in June 1995 as a reserve for possible operations in Yugoslavia. And in 1997 became a part of the UK Rapid Reaction Force.

*HQ locations and principal operations of World War II and in 1946 & 1947:*

Canterbury (Kent) in late summer of 1943; 12 December, Egypt; 9–21 January 1944 at sea; February 1944 Poona (India); elements of this HQ remained in India; 17 March to 19 April at Maungdaw; early summer became Area Command Silchar (Surma Valley); 13 August arrived Ceylon (modern Sri Lanka); early October Teknaf; November Maungdaw; December Teknaf; January 1945 Myebon and Kangaw, Tactical HQ in Motor Launch, main HQ aboard HMIS *Narbada*; February Akyabb and later Myebon; 16 March sailed for Madras (India); spring in Poona and later Kharakvasa; 12 September arrived Hong Kong.<sup>17</sup> The internal security duties which the Brigade's units carried out in the next two years included: the prevention of smuggling and illegal exports; raiding opium dens; patrols against armed robbers; and other police duties.

*Tactical HQ 1944:*

February/March Cox's Bazaar and aboard LCH 261 for Alethangyaw operations.

*Formation of RM Brigade:*

In 1945–6 most long-service RMs were naval gunnery rates, and 720 Marines (mostly 'HOs') were drafted to Hong Kong to replace army commandos in the spring of 1946. Six RM Commandos were to be formed but this was cut by the end of 1946 to three in the Far East; 40 Commando RM (formerly '44'), 42 Commando RM and later joined by 45 commando RM.<sup>18</sup>

*HQ locations and principal events 1946–80:*

1946 to 17 May 1947 in Hong Kong; June 1947 to August 1949 in Malta (during these years elements of this HQ went to the Canal Zone (Egypt) from January to April 1948); August 1949 to 23 May 1950 Brigade reinforcing Honk Kong garrison; June 1950 to March 1952 in Malaya, taking responsibility for military

operations with police from August 1950; March 1952 to May 1953 in Malta (on 29 November 1952 the Duke of Edinburgh presented colours to 40 RM, 42 RM and 45 RM); May 1953 to August 1954 in the Canal Zone, Egypt (some elements stayed until September 1954); August 1954 to April 1961 in Malta except for operational tours (Cyprus in September 1955 to August 1956, 'Suez' operation November 1956, Tripoli exercise April 1957 and other HQ exercises); April 1961 to 1971 based on Singapore with three tours by HQ in Sarawak (July 1963 to October 1963, April to January 1964, January to March 1965); by late 1971 established at Plymouth where this HQ continued to be based; deployed as HQ in Norway January to March 1979 and again in 1980.<sup>19</sup>

*HQ locations and principal events 1981–97:*

Based at Stonehouse Barracks, Plymouth and mobilised for the Falkland Islands operation 'Corporate' from 2 April 1982 when merged with HQ Commando Forces RM, landed East Falkland 20 May, fought various successful actions (see Chapter 11) and returned to Plymouth after 11 July 1982. Deployed to northern Iraq for operation 'Haven' in April 1991 returning to Plymouth May/June 1991.

*Miscellaneous:*

The Brigade commander's pennant was navy blue with inverted red dagger.<sup>20</sup>

#### **4 SS/Commando Brigade**

*General history:*

In August 1943 the RM Office had expected 4 Commando Bde to include 45, 46 and 47 RM Cdos, but formed in UK September 1943, CO Brig B. W. Leicester with 10 (Inter-Allied) Cdo, 41 RM Cdo, 46 RM Cdo and 47 RM Cdo with HQ staff from 101 RM Bde. Raised 48 RM Commando on approval dated 1 February 1944. The Brigade HQ was in France and NW Europe from June 1944 until the winter of 1945. While at Ostend in October its HQ was the planning authority for the Walcheren landings and at this time 46 RM Cdo was replaced by 4 (Army) Cdo. During the winter of 1944–5 this HQ had responsibilities from time to time for sectors of the Allied line in Holland but Commandos were sometimes detached to other commands, as when 41 RM Cdo and 48 RM Cdo were under command of 116 RM Brigade, the remainder of the Brigade under its HQ formed a mobile reserve of 41 RM Cdo, 46 RM Cdo and elements of 10(I-A) Cdo, located south-west of Rotterdam. On 22 April the last of its raids was made by units under command. In late May 1945 the Brigade moved to Minden (Germany), where it was reinforced by drafts from 1 Commando Brigade in preparation for service in the Far East, but returned to the UK and was disbanded in December 1945.<sup>2</sup>

#### **40 RM Commando/40 Commando RM**

*Origin and titles:*

Formed at Deal with 'A', 'B' and 'X' Companies in February 1942 as *The RM Commando*, it was briefly known as 'A' RM Commando (12–18 October 1942) before being designated 40 RM Commando.<sup>3</sup> In August 1945 retitled 40 RM Commando (Light) until personnel disbanded but 44 RM Cdo in Hong Kong was later redesignated 40 Commando RM. On the original formation in 1942 the personnel were mainly volunteers from RM battalions, with an officer and 80 men of 8th Argylls; a USMC officer and two other ranks in the summer of 1942 were the first of several American Marines to serve with 40 RM Cdo.<sup>4</sup>

*Principal operations in World War II:*

After training in Scotland and Portsmouth Dockyard preparatory to the proposed raid on Dieppe, operation 'Rutter', embarked twice for this raid before it was cancelled. When it was remounted as 'Jubilee' (see chapter 4), the Commando landed at Dieppe on 19 August. Returned to the Isle of Wight, where the Commando had been based since 28 June; in October trained in Weymouth before going to Irvine (Scotland) in January 1943 and two weeks at Achnacarry in April; reorganised into Troops before sailing for Sicily early in June after landing rehearsals on the Clyde. On 10 July landed at Cape Passaro; many of 'B' Troop killed on 1 August when the Commando was aboard an LSI as a floating reserve; 8 September spearheaded 231 Brigade's landing at St Venere, withstood counterattacks and advanced to Pizzo; 3 October landed Termoli (see chapter 7); 14 January to 21 February 1944 supported 56 (London) Division in crossing Garigliano river, later raiding behind enemy lines; 2–23 March patrolled and held sectors of Anzio Beachhead, making one major incursion with 9 (Army) Cdo into enemy defences. Landed Vis on 5 May; provided boarding parties and raided Komiza 23–4 May, Brac 3–4 June (see chapter 7), Mljet 6–13 July. August/September in Malta, reinforced by seven officers and 160 other ranks; 21 September returned to Italy; 24 September landed in Albania to capture Sarande with 2 (Army) Cdo on 9 October; advanced elements in Corfu on 13 October to garrison and administer the island until 9 November; but 'A' and 'X' Troops remained till 1 January 1945; main body at Turi (nr Salerno) until returned to Corfu 9 January 1945 to 27 February. During 22–31 March held a sector of line south of Comacchio; 1–2 April operation 'Roast' at Comacchio (see chapter 7); 11–13 April operation 'Impact' to cross Menate Canal; 16 April, after casualties, formed into three Troops at Ravenna; guards for prison camps etc. until June when sailed for UK.<sup>5</sup>

*Reorganisation:*

On return to UK 40 RM Cdo was based at Basingstoke (Hampshire); as of 12 September 40 RM Cdo absorbed men of 43 RM Cdo and became The RM Cdo of 2 Commando Brigade. (On 24 September the Army Commando in 2 Cdo Brigade was formed by 2 and 9 (Army) Cdos at Alresford, nr Colchester.) The men of 40 RM Cdo were posted to Wrexham for demobilisation or to Towyn before the Commando disbanded, early in October 1945. It was re-formed in Hong Kong in the summer of 1947 by redesignating 44 RM Cdo as 40 Commando RM.

*Operations 1945–80:*

May 1948 in Haifa during the Arab–Israeli battles, and last unit to leave on 30 June; moved from Malta to Cyprus on 1 November 1948 with 3 Bde RM; August 1949 to May 1952 patrolled over 300 sq. miles of Malaya from the Thai border to Pangkor Island on west coast, mainly in Kedah and Perak, an officer and five other ranks killed in these actions. On 1 July 1952 in Malta; February 1953 to October 1954 in Canal Zone (Egypt) guarding installations and on desert exercises; based on Malta 1954–62 and deployed in Cyprus 1855 to 1958 against EOKA guerrillas; 'Suez' operation 6–14 November 1956; returned to Malta,

exercises, operations in Cyprus till 1958 and spring of 1959. Based on Singapore May 1962 until October 1971 with tours in South East Asia — December 1962 to January 1963 in Brunei and Sarawak; April to July and October 1963 to February 1964 in Sarawak; July to December 1964 at Tawau; May 1965 in Johore; July to November 1965 in Serian; May to September 1966 in Simmangeang Barracks (Borneo) and elements in Brunei; later moved to various barracks in Singapore until 30 October 1971, with a tour of duty in Hong Kong in September 1970; based on Seaton Barracks (Plymouth) from late 1971. Spearhead battalion to Cyprus on 17 July to 16 September 1974; tours in Northern Ireland 14 June to 18 October 1972, 16 June to 16 October 1973, 16 August to 15 December 1976; from 5 March 1979 for four months; and during part of 1980 in London Derry

*Some operations and deployments 1981–97:*

- 1982 Landed on East Falkland 20/21 May; provided the protection force for San Carlos area; two companies seconded on 11 June to 1st Bn Welsh Guards to replace the Welsh casualties at Goose Green and in advance by helicopter to Sapper Hill 14 June; companies to West Falkland 15 June.
- 1983 move to Taunton (Norton Manor Camp); tour in South Armagh; last Commando landing from *Hermes* for exercise ashore in Turkey (October)
- 1984 Exercises in Egypt.  
With UNFICYP summer in Cyprus.
- 1986 February composite company to Brunei for exercise 'Curry Trail'.  
One Troop on raiding exercises from Gibraltar.  
Deployed to Belize.
- 1988 20 July returned from a successful tour of Northern Ireland based in South Armagh. Fifty Marines of A Company recalled from Christmas leave on 26 December and deployed at Lockerbie to search for wreckage from the PanAm aircraft which had exploded over the town. The search was so thorough that men found themselves searching almost inaccessible woods, thick pine forests and never forgetting to look up every five metres for pieces lodged in trees
- 1989 April deployed in exercise 'Dragon Hammer 89'
- 1991 Summer: a company provided an element of the multinational 'Rainbow Battalion' in Turkey, which was part of the air/land deterrent protecting the Kurds.
- 1992 May the A Company flew to Kuwait for cross-training with Kuwaitis whose weapons included Russian RPG–7 anti-tank rocket launchers, gave fire demonstrations of commando weapons and trained in the desert. Other Companies were in the Caribbean at this time and a Troop from A Company deployed to the Indian Ocean for exercise 'Orient 92'.
- 1993/4 the Commando served a tour in Northern Ireland based in West Belfast. Returned May 1994.
- 1994 October C Company Group on exercise 'Sandy Warrior'.
- 1995/6 Commando served a tour in East Tyrone, Northern Ireland
- 1996 Series of exercises and cross-training in South Africa during 'Ocean Wave' deployment, which took the Cdo to the Far East and a late summer on exercise 'Desert Song' in Jordan.
- 1997 autumn — provided the Ld Cdo Group/Spearhead for the JRDF.

*Miscellaneous*

Flag had pale blue background with navy blue centre segment carrying inverted red dagger.<sup>7</sup> Memorable dates: 3 October the landing at Termoli (in 1943); and 6 November the assault on Port Said (in 1956). Companies 'A', 'B' and 'C' in 1997.

**41 RM Commando/41 Commando RM**

*Origin and titles:*

Formed 10 October 1942 at Pembroke Dock (south Wales) from 8th Battalion RM; was briefly B RM Commando (12–28 October) before being designated 41 RM Commando,<sup>9</sup> which was disbanded at Llwyngwrill (north Wales) on 20 February 1946. Re-formed on 16 August 1950 at Bickleigh and Plymouth as 41 (Independent) Commando RM for service in Korea, and disbanded 22 February 1952 at Plymouth.<sup>9</sup> Re-formed on 31 March 1960 at Bickleigh as 41 Commando RM. Reduced to a Cadre from time to time. Disbanded in Deal in April 1981 when personnel were merged with other Commandos.

*Principal operations in World War II:*

After training in Scotland (7 April to 27 June 1943), the Commando sailed for Sicily, landing on 10 July (see chapter 5). On 9 September landed at Salerno to capture a defile (see chapter 5) and withdrawn after suffering 50 per cent casualties. On 19 September returned to UK. On 6 June 1944 landed to capture Lion-sur-Mer strongpoint; served with 4 SS Bde in Orne line and later breakout; 1 November landed north of 'gap' at Walcheren to capture Westkappelle. January 1945 at Bergen-op-Zoom (Holland) and during next few months served as line and reserve troops for time to time in Maas River area; 30 May to 26 November in Hesse (Germany) before returning to UK.

*41 (Independent) Commando*

Fought in Korean war, initial strength 219 all ranks, including five RN personnel. Landed Japan 5 September 1950 to join US Army Special Raiding Force. 12 September mounted raids near Inchon, west Korean coast (see chapter 8); in November came under command of 1 (US) Marine Division and took part in Chosin operations (see chapter 8), withdrawing to Hungnam by 8 December; strength raised to 300 during 1951; 7 April raided east coast railway; occupied major islands in Wonsan Bay (east coast of Korea) and raided Korean coastal defences (see chapter 8). Returned to UK early in 1952 and disbanded in February at Bickleigh.

*Major deployments 1960–81*

Re-formed 31 March 1960 as 41 Cdo RM. Based in UK 1960–3; 27 January to April 1964 as first Commando RM assigned to UK Strategic Reserve and deployed in Tanganyika and Kenya (February). On return to the UK stationed at Bickleigh from 7 April 1964, and in the following years took part in several major exercises in Norway and the West Indies, between the following deployments: 18 April to 13 August 1969 in Mediterranean; 28 September to 10 November on peacekeeping duties in Northern Ireland; 3 September to 20 October 1971 based on Malta; visited USA in *Bulwark* May–June 1972 for exercise 'Rum Punch' with USMC; returned to Malta on 6 July until temporarily disbanded. The winter of 1974–5 was

spent with UN Force in Cyprus; by April 1977 reduced to Salerno Company Group, which was Malta Garrison, leaving 30 March 1979. Meanwhile 41 Commando RM was re-formed at Deal in the autumn of 1977, where it was based until disbanded in 1981; served in Northern Ireland 27 February to 28 June 1978; winter 1978 on London duties; with UN Forces in Cyprus during winter of 1979; on peacekeeping duties in Northern Ireland early summer of 1980. Last trooping of the Commando's colour July 1981.

*Miscellaneous:*

Flag of old gold background and centre segment as for 40 Cdo RM.<sup>10</sup> Memorable date: 9 September, landing at Salerno (1943). Coys 'E', 'F', and 'G' in 1980.

**42 RM Commando/42 Commando RM**

*Origin and titles:*

Formed in August 1943 at Sway (nr Lymington) from 1st RM Bn, the Commando was redesignated: 42 RM Commando (Light) in August 1945<sup>11</sup>, and 42 Commando RM early in 1946.

*Principal operations in World War II:*

After ship damaged 42 RM Cdo reached India by August 1944 and carried out jungle training at Belgaum with 1 (Army) Cdo; later trained at Combined Operations Training Centre (Indian east coast) in temperatures of 45 C at times. October 1944 at Teknaf; November relieved a battalion of 74 (Indian) Bde at Maungdaw, patrolling aggressively into Japanese-held areas; December Teknaf; 12 January 1945 at Myebon; 19 January to early February at Kangaw (see chapter 7); early summer, exercise 'Lilliput' with Brigade at Kharakvasa (India); arrived Hong Kong about 11 September, where the Commando remained as part of the garrison after civilian administration restored in April 1946.

*Principal deployments 1946–80:*

1946 to June 1947 in Hong Kong; July 1947 to early 1948 based on Malta; May 1948 at Jerusalem, then Haifa, before evacuation on 27 June. While based in Malta, the Commando carried out exercises in Tripoli and Internal Security duties in the Canal Zone; returned to Hong Kong in August 1949; 1950–2 in Malaya based on Ipoh (Perak) for antiterrorist operations and later in southern Malaya; June 1953 returned to Malta. With Brigade in Canal Zone May 1953 to September 1954, when the Commando returned via Malta to Bickleigh to staff the Commando School from 4 October. The Commando remained here with exercises in Norway in 1955 and 1956, until the Commando was reactivated on 1 August 1956. Landed in 'Suez' operation 6 November 1956 (see chapter 9), and remained after the Brigade withdrew, until 27 November, later returning to Bickleigh as training cadre and operational nucleus. (One Troop in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, for eight months in 1957).<sup>12</sup> Reactivated in summer of 1958 for Lebanon crisis and embarked for exercises in Libya; returned to Bickleigh and reduced again to a training cadre until 1959; reactivated for commando carrier force; embarked *Bulwark* March 1960 and after exercises in the Mediterranean began 11 years of service based on Singapore; 1 July 1961 landed Kuwait as defence force; December 1962 to Brunei at the time of the Indonesian confrontation, serving there till April 1963. In Sarawak July to October 1963 and February to June 1964; at Tawau December 1964 to May 1965; in Lundu area December 1965 to May 1966; at Aden 11 October to 29 November 1967 and retained until May at various periods in commando carriers; returned to Singapore until October 1971. Returned to UK in the summer of 1971 and spent eight periods of duty in Northern Ireland including: summer 1972, spring of 1973, summer 1974, winter 1975, spring of 1976, and July to November 1978. Also deployed in Norway on exercises in January to March or later, during 1979 and 1980. Company Group to New Hebrides from 13 June 1980 for two months.

*Some Operations and deployments 1981–97:*

- 1981 exercise 'Mainspring'.
- 1982 The only Cdo RM to go to Norway
- 1982 M Coy elements in recapture of South Georgia 24 April.  
Landed Falkland Islands 20/21 May; advanced by helicopter to Mt Kent and patrolled from the Mt Kent 31 May to 11 June; night attack on Mt Harriet was successful 11/12 June; flown forward to NE shoulder of Tumbledown and marched into Stanley 14 June.
- 1983 Exercises in Canada.  
1984 tour in South Armagh, N Ireland
- 1985 M Coy in London ceremonies, November.
  
- 1986 exercise 'Westward Shift' with 42RM 'opposing' Dutch 1 ACG & 45 RM Grp.  
Exercise with Spanish amphibious shipping  
London Public Duties 17 June to 15 July  
Exercises 'Sea Soldier' and 'Eternal Triangle'
- 1987 Recce Trp in N Ireland with Army units.
- 1988 Deployed in Norway during Spring, WD87.
- 1989 In Belfast during tour of N Ireland  
M Coy training at Fort Whiteroga.
- 1992 Tour in N Ireland
- 1995 In the summer L Coy carried out joint training in Romania with the Romanian 2nd Mountain Brigade in the Brasvo/Predeal region. (Exercise 'Eastern Climb').  
M Coy as Fleet Stand By Rifle Coy assisted civilians on Montserrat after volcano eruptions, helped in the aftermath of a hurricane on Anguilla in September.  
K Coy and elements of HQ in exercise 'French Phoenix' off the coast of South Wales, before going to Brunei for exercise 'Curry Trail'.
- 1996 In America on exercise 'Purple Star'.
- 1997 Norway on WD97

*Miscellaneous:*

Flag of red St George cross on white cross over yellow ground, with white number '42' dissected by inverted dagger in the centre. This flag is based on a Lt-Col's colour in the Lord High Admiral's Rgt of 1664–89, adopted by 1st RM Bn as their unit flag in World War II.

The Commando raised a pipe band in 1943, which, with only a few breaks over the years, continues in 1997. Since 1968 one of these pipers has been appointed the Commandant General's piper.  
Memorable dates: 31 January, the battle of Kangaw (in 1945); and 11/12 June the attack on Mount Harriet (in 1982). Coys 'K', 'L' and 'M'.

#### **43 RM Commando/ 43 Commando RM**

##### *Origin and titles:*

Formed on 1 August 1943 at Hursley (nr Winchester) from 2nd RM Bn and absorbed in 40 RM Cdo as of 12 September 1945. In 1961, when the Corps was reorganising its Commando Units, 43 Commando RM was re-formed (5 September) at Plymouth and disbanded at Eastney in mid-November 1968.<sup>13</sup>

##### *Principal operations in World War II:*

After training in Scotland, the Commando joined 2 SS Bde, arriving in North Africa late in 1943; 23–4 January 1944 landed as flank force at Anzio against little opposition; 2 February with 9 (Army) Cdo attacked hill features after night infiltration north of Allied position on Garigliano River; 28 February landed on Vis, joining 2 SS Brigade's force on this island; 22–3 March raided Hvar with partisans; in May carried out unit recces on Uljan and Pasman islands with 9 (Army) Cdo and 43 RM Cdo; 22 May raid on Mljet with other units proved unsuccessful in steep hills; 2–4 June on Brac (see chapter 7); small recce patrol returned to Brac (20 June) but found no suitable positions for artillery to shell garrison; July, recce patrol on Hvar, ambushed Germans (12 July) and visited Korcula; artillery landed after patrols on Korcula and Peljesak Peninsula; 11 September returned to Brac to block possible German threats from the mainland when partisans took control of this island; 16–18 September landed on Solta and drove garrison into heavily a defended enclave; 27 September sailed from Vis for Italy. From 28 October to 22 December 1944 part of 'Floyd Force' landed at Dubrovnik (at that time in Yugoslavia) as nucleus of force engaged in mountain warfare. After intense training in Italy the Commando took over a sector of the line south of Comacchio Spit for several periods in March 1945; 2 April operation 'Roast', Lake Comacchio (see chapter 7), where Cpl Tom Hunter was awarded a posthumous VC for actions on 3 April; the Commando reached a point short of the Valetta canal; and relieved on 4 April. On 16 April, after moving to Argenta area, the Commando advanced on the Quaderna canal, cutting the Argenta road; 17 April successfully stormed buildings in open country north of Argenta Road and held off strong counterattacks but withdrawn at daylight on 18 April; the next night again advanced to the buildings before moving westwards, clearing the banks of the Reno; this was the commando's last action, and in June it returned to the UK being absorbed into 40 Cdo RM on 12 September 1945.<sup>15</sup>

##### *Re-formation in 1961:*

For the six months after reforming in September, the Commando was training while it was built up to full establishment; 12 Marines from the Commando served as orderlies and guards on Prime Minister Macmillan's visit to Bermuda on 20 December 1961; 1–2 March 1962 reorganised from Troops to three rifle companies, a Support Coy and an HQ Coy.

##### *Major deployments 1962–8:*

October 1962 on exercise 'Donald Duck' in Norway; mid-1963 exercise on Normandy Coast; 6–13 September on exercise 'Bar Frost II' in Norway; 7 January 1964 placed in Strategic Reserve at 10 days' notice and organised for air lift, having trained to be air portable; 6 March embarked in *Bulwark* for North African exercise 'Sand Fly II' and subsequently training before being flow back to UK. In January 1965 took part in exercise 'Cold Winter' in Norway; 2 July presented with colours by the Duke of Edinburgh; November, helicopter landing exercise 'Gadfly II'; March 1966 used in exercise 'Morning Glory' to test command and control from HMS *Fearless*; 24 June embarked in *Bulwark* for 'Dry Fly' exercise at Inverary (Scotland); 28 February 1967 elements of the Commando to Nassau (Bahamas) for exercise 'Winter Sun'; spring of 1967 reorganised into special companies for demonstrations etc in recruiting: 'O' Coy in London ceremonies and display; 'P' Coy at Royal Tournament and street lining parties for ceremonial parades; and 'R' Coy providing youth activity teams. On 28 November 1967 to Melville (later Comacchio) Camp in Portsmouth; April 1968 recruiting companies reorganised as 'O' and 'P' prior to rundown during autumn.

##### *Miscellaneous:*

Flag with a red background and yellow segment carrying red dagger (cp: 40 RM Cdo).<sup>16</sup> Memorable date: 2 April, the battle of Comacchio (in 1945)  
Companies: 'O', 'P' and 'R' in 1968.

#### **44 RM Commando/44 Commando RM**

##### *Origin and titles:*

Formed 1 August 1943<sup>17</sup> at Ashurst, Hampshire, from 3rd RM Bn, the unfit and unsuitable members of the Battalion being drafted to other units. The Commando's title having been briefly 44 RM Commando (Light), was changed in 1946 to 44 Commando RM, and the following year, on 16 March 1947, it was redesignated 40 Commando RM, which had origins as the first RM Cdo, and which title the Corps wished to retain,<sup>18</sup> in perpetuating the titles of Commandos which had each served in a principal theatre of World War II.

##### *Principal operations and deployments:*

In training at Achnacarry in September 1943; sailed for the Far East, arriving in India for training from December 1943 to February 1944; deployed in Burma from March 1944; 11–17 March made landings at Alehangyaw in rear of Japanese lines; March–April patrolling from Maungdaw; 9 April moved to Silchar (see 3 SS Bde history summary); 13 August at Trincomalee after transit via Bangalore, then to training with 3 Commando Brigade before landings at Myebon etc (see p. Chapter 7). In 1945 the Commando sailed for Hong Kong, landing on 11–12 September; they remained with the Brigade on garrison duties after the civil administration was restored in March 1946, and were renamed — see 40 Commando RM summary history.

##### *Miscellaneous:*

Early in 1946 they cut their crest in a 2ft deep outline 80ft by 54ft on the hill side at Fanling, facing the Chinese border with Hong Kong, but little of this earthwork remained in 1970.<sup>20</sup> Memorable date: Kangaw

31 January (in 1945). No record of a unit flag has been traced. The companies were designated as: A Troop; B Tp; C Tp; D Tp; X tp; S Tp; and HQ Troop.

#### **45 RM Commando/Commando RM**

##### *Origin and titles:*

Formed during the first week of August 1943 from 5th RM Bn at Burley, Hampshire, with five Troops ('A' to 'E'), support Troop ('F') and HQ Troop ('H'), with 500 all ranks. After world War II the Commando was reorganised in the UK, redesignated 45 Commando RM in Hong Kong about March 1946 and continues.

##### *Principal operations and deployments in World War II:*

Landed 6 June 1944 in Normandy with 1 SS Bde; in Orne line (see chapter 6); 19 August night infiltration with 1 SS Bde to Angerville; returned to Bexhill (Susses) after 83 days in France. Returned to Europe and on 23 January 1945 in action at Montforterbeek; March to April in river crossings of the Rhine, Weser, Aller and Elbe; reached Neustadt on Baltic on 2 May; stationed in Germany until June 1945, when Commando returned to Sussex.

##### *Reorganisation:*

The commando was reorganised in the autumn of 1945 and retained in preparation for service in the Far East.

##### *Principal deployments 1946–50:*

The Commando sailed for Hong Kong in January 1946; served on internal security duties in Hong Kong 1946–7. January 1947 Troops redesignated 'A', 'B', 'E', 'X' and 'Z' to come in line with other units in 3 Cdo bde; May 1947 to December 1948 based on Malta, deploying to: Benghazi (Libya) March 1948; Haifa (modern Israel) in spring 1948; July last 'HOs' left; August training in Tripoli; January 1949 to Canal Zone catching 40 thieves, many stealing telephone cables; June/July at Aqaba, at that time Jordan's only port. Sailed from Suez for Hong Kong in August to reinforce the Honk Kong garrison for nine months.

##### *Malaya emergency 1950–2:*

The commando arrived in Malaya from Hong Kong in June 1950 for jungle training; July at Tapah in Perak to resettle Chinese squatters and conduct antiterrorism patrols; August 1951 moved to Batu Gajah in Ipoh area, patrolling swamps; 31 March 1952 sailed for Malta.

##### *Mediterranean 1953–9:*

Carried out training while based on Malta and deployed from time to time. May 1953 in Canal Zone protecting ammunition dumps and carrying out amphibious exercises in eastern Mediterranean; returned to Malta in August 1954; training exercises in North Africa; and deployed from Malta to Cyprus in September 1955. Operations against EOKA terrorists in Cyprus, initially at Kyrenia on north coast, then in Troodos mountains; February 1956 formed ski-Troop. Returned to Malta on 16 August, for 'Suez' operation. Landed Port Said on 6 November (see chapter 9), in first helicopter deployment in battle area; withdrawn to Malta in November. Deployed in 1956 to Tripoli for training; in Cyprus May to October 1957 on antiterrorist patrols; the Commando returned to Malta but 'X' and 'Z' Troops formed 'Heliforce' in Cyprus during June 1958; training in Benghazi before returning to Cyprus from July to December. In 1959 trained in Malta.

##### *Aden 1960–7:*

The Commando's main body sailed from Malta and arrived in Aden on 4 April 1960; advanced elements had arrived in March and were in Dhala by 25 March, where the commando over the next six years would from time to time patrol to the Yemeni border. From 1 to 19 July in Kuwait as part of the defence force. In August first deployed on internal security in Aden Colony; in October patrolling from Dhala. In September 1962 reorganised from five Troops to 'X', 'Y' and 'Z' Companies. Training continued in Aden with some exercises in Kenya (East Africa), when all companies were there for two weeks in 1963 on 'Winged Marine'. January/February 1964 in Tanganyika (central Africa) to aid local government quell a mutiny; March visited Mombassa (at that time in Keyna). First operations in the Radfan 30 April to 28 May, which was followed over the years by: second tour from 3 July to 6 August; third — 20 January to 4 March 1965 (mounted 305 night patrols); fourth — 20 April to May; fifth - 23 June to 28 July; sixth — 22 September to 26 October; seventh 15 December to 28 January 1966; eighth — 14 April to 22 May; ninth — 14 September to 10 November; tenth and last from 6 February to June 1967. Between tours in the Radfan, the Commando was frequently deployed on internal security duties in Aden Colony. The last elements of the Commando left Aden on 29 November 1967.

##### *United Kingdom 1967–80:*

Based on Stonehouse Barracks after returning from Aden, the Commando served in the Strategic Reserve. In June 1968 it was the 'enemy' in Norway for the exercise 'Polar Express'. In October 1968 it was deployed in Northern Ireland. In the spring of 1969 'X' coy was in the Bahamas, 'Y' Coy aboard *Fearless* in the Mediterranean and 'Z' Coy in Norway. 13 May 1969 HM the Queen Elizabeth II presented new colours to the Commando; in July 'Z' Coy deployed to the West Indies; September the Commando embarked in *Bulwark* for a month's deployment as part of NATO's southern flank forces in the Mediterranean. In 1970 commenced intensive snow warfare and mountain training, with 845 Naval Air Cdo Squadron and the four Sioux of an RM Cdo Flight. Spring 1971 850 all ranks moved to a new base in the old RNAS HMS *Condor* in Arbroath (Angus) as a Commando Group which in addition to 45 Cdo RM included: a battery of 29 Cdo Light Rgt RA; a Troop of 59th (Independent) Sqn RE; other support personnel; and an RM organisation for the base. The Commando was the first specialist Mountain and Arctic Warfare unit, although retaining general skills. There were tours in Northern Ireland: summer 1970; summer 1971 (when PO F. MacLaughlin was awarded the George Medal in June)<sup>1</sup>; winter 1971–2; autumn 1974; summer 1977; and August 1979.

1980 in September exercise 'Teamwork 80' which included 6–days ashore with the Brigade in various 'assaults' in the areas of Halsafjord and Vinjeford in Norway. Returned to the UK for mountain training in October in preparation for January 1981 exercises in Norway.

##### *Some operations and deployments 1981–97:*

1981 late–Summer in Belfast

- 1982 landed East Falkland 20/21 May; advanced during 30 and 31 May to Douglas Settlement over 30km from San Carlos with loads of some 50kg per man; successful night attack on Two Sisters mountain 11/12 June; advanced to Sapper Hill on 13/14 June joining the Welsh Guards who had been flown there.
  - 1983 Support Trip on NBC exercise Porton Down
  - 1986 Tour in Belfast, N Ireland.
  - 1987 Contingent in Royal Tournament.
  - 1990 North Norway exercises including the landing of 550 men and 35 vehicles in Tovik/Grov area.  
Tour of duty in South Armagh, N Ireland.
  - 1991 In Northern Ireland on a roulement tour of six months]
  - 1992 A team from the Commando took part in the Swiss Commando Raid Competition where they yomped about 30kms up a Swiss mountain within 3½ hours, a Dragon anti-tank shoot, a shoot with a Panzerfaust (equivalent to an LAW), and other firing exercises with Swiss weapons, a 3-minute swim across a fast flowing river, silence shots at two sentries before a house clearance and 'killing' its five occupants in under 30 seconds. This team achieved the highest score not only of any foreign team in that year's competition but the highest by a foreign team since the inception of the competition.
  - 1993 Deployed to Belize for six months.
    - 1994 Deployed to Kuwait in operation 'Driver'.
    - 1995 Deployed as Fermanagh roulement battalion returning at the end of November.
  - 1996 Served as Fleet Standby Rifle Coy from January.
    - 1996 From October the Commando was Spearhead Battalion as part of JRDF into 1997.
  - 1997 Provided Fleet Stand-By Rifle Troop with Marines in West Indies guard ship and RN ships off west Africa.
- Miscellaneous:*
- Flag green ground with red letters '45' dissected by red inverted dagger.<sup>2</sup> Memorable dates: 23 January, the attack on Montforterbeek, near Linne, Holland (in 1945); and 11/12 June attack on Two Sisters (in 1982).
  - Coys 'X', 'Y' and 'Z' in 1997.

#### **46 RM Commando**

##### *Origin and titles:*

Formed at Dorchester, West Dorset, in August 1943 mainly from men of 9th RM Bn; its title was briefly 46 Commando RM before being disbanded on 31 January 1946.

##### *Principal operations 1943–6:*

Trained in Scotland with two weeks at Achnacarry (23 October to 9 November 1943); mobilisation completed on 24 January 1944, but intended night raiding role cancelled. Embarked 1 June with cliff-climbing and demolition equipment for destruction of Benerville Bty (or Houlgate Bty as alternative target) in Normandy, but unfavourable weather and the fact that neither battery was harassing shipping, led to operation being cancelled. Landed Berniers (Normandy) on 7 June (D+1) capturing strongpoint at Petit Enfer (see chapter 6) before occupying the town. 7/8 June patrols sent inland to La Deliverande, Douvres; 9 June occupied the village of Douvres and came under command of 3 Canadian Division; 11–12 June actions in Mue Valley (see chapter 6); 17 June rejoined 4 SS Bde in Orne line; 'S' Troop re-equipped with support weapons; 17 August patrols entered Troarn to find it deserted but heavily mined; 19 August with 47 RM Cdo attacked Dozule successfully after silent approach at night. On 25 August, having been brought forward in transport, the Commando was south of Beuzeville, the CO Lt-Col Campbell Hardy was wounded but continued in action while the road was cleared a well-camouflaged enemy defences were engaged in a fire-fight, as the Commando and a Para Bn advanced. After three hours the second-in-command, Maj John Lee, MC, and 10 others had been killed and 37 all ranks wounded before the commando was withdrawn. The Commando went into billets — the first in 12 weeks — on 26 August at St Maclou; 11–15 September guarded prisoners near Le Havre; 18 September in Bray Dunes area (Belgium) occupying former German defences investing Dunkirk; 7 October sailed for UK to join 1 SS Brigade. The Commando received 200 reinforcements and reorganised; sailed to Ostend (Belgium) on 15 January 1945 and detached from 1 SS Brigade for deployment to Antwerp. Took over a sector of line Heel to Beegden on the Mass on 2 February, with standing patrols out but little activity. On 12 February the Commando relieved 3 (Army) Commando at Linne, and after spending several weeks here and further west, the Commando trained for river crossings. It crossed the Rhine on 23 March, establishing a bridgehead, helping to clear Wesel next day; in April in actions crossing the Weser, Aller and on 29 April the Elbe. Arrived Neustadt (near Lubeck) on 5 May and returned to UK on 8 June. The commando spent the summer of 1945 at Tunbridge Wells training for operations in the Far East, but the Commando's strength began to be run down from October.

##### *Miscellaneous:*

Memorable date: 11 June, the attack on Le Hamel and Rots (in 1944)

#### **47 RM Commando**

##### *Origin and titles:*

Formed on 1 August 1943<sup>3</sup> at Dorchester, West Dorset, mainly from 10th RM Battalion and disbanded at Haywards Heath, West Sussex, on 31 January 1946.

##### *Principal operations 1943–6:*

After training in Scotland a 32-strong detachment was provided for MTB operations from Lerwick (Shetland Islands), two raids were attempted: one successful in a landing in Norway; and the second aborted due to presence of enemy ships. 8 February 1944 to Herne Bay (Kent); landed Normandy 6 June and next day (D+1) prepared to assault Port-en-Bessin, captured the following day (see chapter 6); 12 June moved to Orne line; 18 June raiding force sent into forward German positions; 19 August crossed Dives River to attack Dozule with 41 RM Cdo; moved to Beuzeville area and on 26 August after night infiltration took Toutanville; 31 August, after brief rest, crossed Seine and on 2 September at Fécamp, closed the last enemy escape route from Le Havre; 18 September in line investing Dunkirk; during October at Wenduine carrying out amphibious exercises and joined by large draft of reinforcements. 1 November

1944 landed at Walcheren but only three of the Commando's amphibious tracked Weasels survived the landing; by D+1 (2 November) afternoon all Troop commanders were casualties but on the morning of D+3 the Commando captured W11 battery and cleared the dunes towards Flushing before returning to Wedune on 10/11 November. 25 November in training at Bergen-op-Zoom; 22 December joined mobile reserve for defensive duties along the Maas, patrolling in anticipation of German counter-attack towards Antwerp, but only enemy fighting patrols crossed the river; 13-14 January 1945 made attack on Kapelsches Veer Island, but, having forced a way into the defences, was withdrawn in face of strong opposition. The island was later captured by 10 Canadian Infantry Brigade. After returning to Bergen-op-Zoom, the Commando was deployed in defence of Walcheren; 12 March to North Beveland, raiding from there to German posts on Schouwen in the Schelt estuary; 7-8 May invested Schouwen. Moved to Germany and by January 1946 were only 100 strong at Minden; brought up to strength in August and had army Troop under command with 130 army personnel serving in the Commando for a period; 31 August moved to Erkenschwick (Ruhr) to administer displaced persons; 28 November returned to UK shortly after moving to Warburg. (See ADM 202/431 for further details of operations.)

*Miscellaneous:*

Memorable date: 7 June capture of Port-en-Bessin (in 1944).

**48 RM Commando**

*Origin and titles:*

Formed<sup>4</sup> at Deal 2-13 March 1944 from 7th Bn and disbanded at Beeding, near Horsham, on 31 January 1946.<sup>5</sup>

*Principal operations 1944-5:*

Trained at Achnacarry 13 March to 3 April 1944; 6 June landed in Normandy and captured the strongpoint at Langrune-sur-Mer where the Commando remained on security duties after suffering 50 per cent casualties; 9 June reinforcements arrived, bringing strength to 250, before advance to Douvres for patrolling; 11 June in Orne line and next day advanced 1,000yds to Sallenelles where the Commando in a defence line for 60 days, although the number of patrols was limited so as not to interfere with other Commandos' patrols, since there were four Commandos on a 2,000yds front. On 20 August moved from Troarn, bypassing Dozule to advance in daylight to reach Clermont-en-Auge, attacked German field batteries etc before midday, and later secured high ground overlooking Dozule; 25 August outflanked enemy positions near Beuzeville which were mortaring 46 RM Cdo, and next night infiltrated behind this town to St Maclou with 41 RM Cdo; advanced across Seine to Valmont against no opposition; 5-13 September in Valmont for rest; policed Le Havre for next two days; 18-27 September held front of 10,000yds investing Dunkirk and patrolling. October trained for Walcheren operation; on 1 November landed on Walcheren, clearing south of the 'gap' (see chapter 7) and successfully assaulted W13 battery about 1600 hours; D+1 (2 November) captured strongpoint W287 at first light (0630 hours), 'A' Troop entering Zouteland at 1100 hours before 47 RM Cdo passed through; clearing dunes while other units gave support fire from north of the 'gap'; the Commando moved north to support 41 RM Cdo on D+4 (5 November) before being withdrawn on 12 November. After rest at Haan, moved to Goes (South Beveland) training reinforcements; three Troops, 'X', 'Y', and 'Z' under command of 47 RM Cdo as only infantry in Oosterhout area at the end of December. During March 1945 the Commando mounted five raids against Schowen and Overflakkee, the Commando suffering casualties on mines. On 25 March in defensive positions on the River Maas at s'Hertogenbosch, a road and rail centre 6,000yds from German positions; enemy artillery and patrols were active; in April on a quieter front of 35,000yds, as reserve to Belgians and Dutch near Kapelsches Veer; raided in dories into the Biesbosch, among marshes and waterlogged islands; 23 April last operation by this Commando to rescue a patrol in the Biesbosch without casualties before ceasing fire, except for defence. From 1 May to 31 August based at Minden (Germany) as defence force for the HQ of Allied Naval Commander Expeditionary Force (ANCF); September to 21 October at Waltrop and near by controlling displaced persons (DPs). October to November 1945 the Commando on occupational duties at Kreis Buren looking after two camps of DPs, with patrols based on five burgomasters' offices; these patrols stopped 'black market' rackets, rapes and armed robberies; Marine officers organised camp improvements before returning to UK on 29 November and disbanded January 1946.<sup>6</sup>

*Miscellaneous:*

Memorable date: 6 June, the landing in Normandy (in 1944).

**RM Engineer Commando**

This unit<sup>7</sup> had developed from units in the RM Battalions which were trained in demolitions and as assault engineers. From 25 October 1943 the first War Establishment was: HQ; Holding Troop; and two fighting Troops (RM Circ 1303/43G dated 26 November 1943). By June 1944 there were 180 all ranks, forming a small HQ with a Training Troop (the Holding Troop?) and two fighting Troops. These were reorganised for the Normandy invasion with HQ and Training Troop in the UK, one Section with 1st SS Bde, one Section with 4 SS Bde, and six Landing Craft Obstruction Clearance Units.

*Sections with Commando Brigades:*

The Section with 1st SS Bde of 39 all ranks commanded by a lieutenant, landed in Normandy on 6 June 1944 at H+75 minutes to demolish bridges; but these were still in enemy hands and this Section prepared the defences of Brigade HQ; later they were employed in mine-clearing and building strongpoints. They also improvised bridges and fords ('wet bridges' lying below the surfaces of rivers), before returning to the UK on 9 September 1944. The Section with 4 SS Bde. The Section which joined 4 SS Bde arrived in France at the end of June 1944 and served in mine-clearing, demolition and other work of assault engineers. In November 1943 a third Section served in the Far East. This Section had joined 3 Commando Brigade in November 1943 and was increased to a Troop in the late summer of 1944. It built the 'roads' at Myebon (from 12 January 1945) and at Kangaw (from 19 January), under appalling conditions on both occasions.

*Landing Craft Obstruction Clearance Units:*

In the Normandy landings on 6 June 1944, Nos 7 and 8 were with Force S, Nos 9 and 10 with Force G, and 11 and 12 with Force J. They were all intended to clear paths through beach obstacles, but owing to the conditions of the tide and dangers from incoming craft the men were unable to use their shallow-water diving gear, but nevertheless cleared obstacles.

*After World War II.*

Royal Marine assault engineers served with various Commandos from time to time and continue to do so, but see also history summary of 59th Independent Cdo Sqn RE.

**Commando Logistic Regiment RM**

In the mid-1960s the permutations of subunits in Commando deployments, were expected to require a flexibility in logistic support which could not be provided from existing formations. After careful study the peacetime and war establishments of new units were determined, and between July 1971 and January 1972 subunits were brought together to form this Regiment. In operations the Regiment HQ became — and becomes — the HQ for the Brigade Maintenance Area (BMA), controlling the logistics to the Brigade's plan. Among its 400 all ranks in 1980 were army personnel from the RCT, REME, ROAC, RAPC, and personnel of the RN Commando Medical Squadron. The Medics did not provide staff for the sick-bays when in barracks, but were equipped to provide medical services in the field during operations (including those in Arctic areas). The Regiment's Transport Squadron was equipped to move supplies from the areas of a beachhead to the Brigade Maintenance Area and from there to distribution points for the units deployed. The Squadron could also transport personnel. The Ordnance Squadron held 'on wheels' (loaded in vehicles) two months' needs in spare parts and technical stores, including those for the Brigade's aircraft and motor transport. In addition men from this Squadron were responsible for stock control in the Maintenance Area and at distribution points, and they distributed the bulk fresh rations, ammunition, petrol, oil and lubricants. The Workshop Squadron's three Troops repaired vehicles, and electronic and other equipment, including instruments, and was equipped to recover light vehicles. All Squadrons continued to provide these services in 1997.

*Deployments and changes in organisation 1981-1997*

1981 training in Sillies.

1982 deployed to Falkland Islands in operation 'Corporate' setting BMA at Ajax Bay and later at Teal (see chapter 11).

1985 training in Wales.

Exercise 'Mainspring'.

Belfast tour in N Ireland.

1991 deployed in operation 'Haven' during April to August(?) when strength raised to over 800, but by mid-September returned to 'a more normal strength of 540 men. The maintenance to vehicles and equipment was completed by 1 October. The configuration of the Regiment as originally laid down, had been modified in practice and was at this time brought up to date.

1993 By late 1993 the First Line Troop of Transport Squadron, the Servicing Bay and the LAD joined HQ Squadron, and the Medical Squadron moved to Coypool (Plymouth) where a new building housed the NAAFI and a purpose built galley for RM chefs who served the new mess rooms. The Workshop Squadron's hangar was renovated. During this year the Regiment put on many displays, with a section from the Ordnance Squadron, another from Transport Squadron and one from HQ plus some last minute additions, all climbing Jenny Cliff to show the Regiment's versatility.

1995 Exercise 'Rolling Deep' (where Rgt repaired CVR(T)s of the Household Cavalry).

26 Aug tasked with establishing an evacuation centre on Antigua for deployment to people evacuated from Montserrat.

Elements in Cyprus supporting 29 Cdo Regt RA.

On 26 October the CO formally took over the former RAF barracks enabling the Regt to bring together its various units. Elements deployed with 45 Commando to Kuwait in operation 'Driver'.

In November and December the Regiment moved to RM Barracks Chivenor.

1997 Winter deployment preparations for WD 98

*Miscellaneous*

Memorable date: 22 May landing at Ajax Bay (in 1982)

**Commando Brigade Air Squadron**

A light aircraft unit was formed by 42 Commando RM in 1965; this flight and others formed to support Commandos, were brought together to form the Commando Brigade Air Squadron on 12 August 1968.<sup>8</sup> In the early 1970s these flights were each equipped with three Sioux AH1 helicopters for which there were four pilots — an RM OC, an RA second-in-command, an RM sergeant and an RA sergeant. Each flight had two observer/gunners, a signaller and three drivers for its vehicles drawn from RM or RA personnel, and an REME team of six airframe fitters and other mechanics. The flights served with their respective Commandos in Northern Ireland and elsewhere, proving Nitesun illumination, forward air command and air OPs. They landed on darkened LPHs at night, and in October 1978, one flight relieved an Army Air Corps' flight in Belize (formerly British Honduras). Three flights served in Norway in 1979 with six Gazelles and six Scout helicopters.<sup>9</sup>

*Deployments and changes in organisation 1981-1997*

The Squadron provided flights in Northern Ireland from time to time in the 1980s and 1990s in support of army units on some occasions. They deployed with 3 Cdo bde to Norway. In 1982 they were deployed in operation 'Corporate' (see chapter 11). They also provided flights for operations in Belize from time to time, as in 1992 a typical year of their 1990s deployments: the A Flight, issued with new tropical flying suits, in served five months in Belize as the roulement for 25 Flight of the Army Air Corps; their Gazelles were fitted with emergency flotation equipment, but weight restrictions meant that 'the optical aid was not fitted'. Much of the flying required extra concentration to identify landing sites in jungle clearings, when the duties were mainly involved with liaison work.

1993 Pilots had additional training at Middle Wallop on part of a new syllabus for the Army Pilots, so that they could work in pairs as Aircraft Captains commanding a section of aircraft. In November Sgt Jack Frost won the Hughes Master Pilot's Trophy awarded annually to the pilot who obtained the best results in the Army Master Pilots' Exam. In 1994 the deployment in Norway only required part of the Squadron but a team also deployed to Kenya to support 3 Para in exercises. On 1 September 1995 the Squadron became a part of 847 Squadron in the Naval Air Command (see below).

#### *Miscellaneous*

Memorable date: 14 June recapture of Falkland Islands (in 1982)

#### **Comacchio Company RM/Comacchio Group RM**

Formed in 1980 with 300 all ranks, this company provided detachments for the defence of naval installations, for Britain's offshore assets in oil rigs and movement of nuclear missiles. The Company took on many of 43RM's traditions including the red-and-old-gold lanyard. It was renamed Comacchio Group on 1 November 1983

Three troops continued to carry out security duties in support of the RN and the RAF throughout the 1980s. The Group — by this date reporting directly to CG — was reorganised in 1992 into three companies for roulement on the west coast of Scotland (see chapter 12) And in the early 1990s they were deployed annually for two weeks of training in Cyprus. In 1993 a company from the Group visited the USA for some USMC courses on fighting at close quarters and anti-terrorist activities. They have continued to carry out security duties in the 1990s, but one Troop went to Belize in 1990 in 1992. Elements in exercise 'Malayan Warrior' during Jan-Feb 1993. In March 1998 elements were again in America with the USMC.

#### *Miscellaneous*

Memorable date: 2 April battle of Comacchio (in 1945) and was the memorable date of the disbanded 43 Commando RM.

#### **29 Commando Regiment RA**

These units' close association with the Commandos began in 1961 when 29th Field Regiment RA began to re-form as 29 Commando Light Regiment RA with four batteries (220 all ranks). The first battery in action, 145 (Maiwand) Bty, joined the Cdo Brigade and was in Borneo firing the 105-mm pack howitzer for the Battery's first shoot 'in anger' on 23 December 1962.<sup>10</sup> By 1965 the 95 Regiment RA of forward observation teams had been reorganised for service with the Commandos, but after the economies of 1976 only one headquarters was retained. The batteries served in Malaya, Singapore, Brunei, Sarawak, Cyprus, Aden, Norway and from 1971 were on tours in Northern Ireland with Commandos.

On 1 April 1977 the first TAVR battery joined the Regiment, 289th Commando Battery. In 1978 the three gun batteries of 29 Cdo Regiment were each equipped with six 105-mm light guns, replacing the pack howitzer, and the TAVR battery was equipped with this light gun. The Commando Forward Observation Battery, 148th (Meiktila) Bty, provided parties to control air strikes and naval support fire, the men being trained parachutists and divers. All ranks of the Regiment wear the green beret on completing their commando training.

#### *Deployments and changes in organisation 1981-1997*

The Regiment deployed in 1982 to the Falkland Islands (see chapter 11). They trained with the Cdo Bde in various exercises including those in Norway and with Commando units in Belize from time to time. They were involved in other exercises including in 1990 a battle run with a rifle company and helicopters.

Batteries were detached for service in Yugoslavia on roulement tours in the late 1980s and 1990s.

#### **20 Commando Battery RA**

This Battery was formed after trials of Rapier missiles for air defence, to support 3 Cdo Bde, and based at Kirton-in-Lindsey [Suffolk?]. Before 1985 a series of trials with Rapiers in Norway led by 1985 to the formation of a cadre which by 1987 (Lt, WO + 3 x Sgts) trained RA gunners for mountain warfare and to work Rapier FSB1. Capt M. G. Flanagan (previously RSM of 29 Cdo Rgt RA) joined Cadre as Project Officer and the Cadre became C Troop, deployed in WD89 with 3 x FSB1 fire units. These gunner officers and NCOs passed the Cdo course but not entitled to wear Green Berets officially. Bty Cmdr appointed in Sept 1989 some months before official formation of the Bty in Apr 1990 as 20 Cdo Bty RA and armed with 24 Javelins as interim measure, as the FSB1s did not work satisfactorily in mountains and cold. In the Spring of 1997 training with Rapier FSB2 but maintained full capacity of 24 x Javelins. To have 10 x FSB2 (an area Short Range Air Defence (SHORAD) system. 24 hour all weather capability with engagement range of 7.2 km.

. The Battery used Air Defence Command Control and Information Systems (ALES) which automated the rapid passage of weapon control instructions from an Army Corps level to individual fire units (note 3 below). By 1998 the systems was to be carried in BV206s. These were expected to have two Autonomous Link Eleven Systems (ALES) which would receive and display tactical information from NATO Link 11 in AWACS aircraft, providing warning of aircraft at ranges of over 750km. ALES would also provide additional information such as IFF (identifying friend from foe), speed, heading and position of aircraft. The Air Defence Troop (RM) came under command of 20 Cdo Bty as did the Dutch Air Defence Trp (RNLMC AD TP). The AD Troop was expected to be fully converted to Rapier FSB2 by March 1998, a system which may be replaced in AD 2013 by another SHORAD System.

#### **59th Independent Commando Squadron RE**

Formed as a Field Company in 1900, the Squadron served in both World Wars; and became closely associated with 3 Cdo Brigade when stationed in Singapore between 1968 and 1971. Re-formed at Plymouth in April 1971 as 59th Independent Commando Squadron, as an integral part of Commando Forces, these engineers were mainly employed in mountain and Arctic warfare. They built bridges, ferried troops, lay and/or cleared minefields, as well as other defences. They could build sophisticated field defences, carry out demolitions, and had a number of general tradesmen among the eight officers and 221 soldiers in the Squadron in 1979. All ranks of the Squadron wear the green beret on completing their commando training.

#### **Other Commando and Special Service Units**

##### *SS Platoon:*<sup>11</sup>

Formed in Singapore on 24 December 1954 this Platoon raided behind Japanese lines (see chapter 4).

##### *30th Assault Unit:*<sup>12</sup>

An intelligence unit had existed since the late summer of 1941 as the special Engineering 30 Commando, included in this unit were RN and RM personnel as well as army troops. In operations in North Africa one Section under an RN lieutenant landed from HMS *Broke* when she crashed the boom at Algiers. The Commando operated in Sicily and Italy, recovering codes and other documents from German

headquarters. In February the Unit was re-formed as a naval intelligence-gathering Commando (wearing green berets and commando flashes). The former CO of 5th RM Battalion recruited many RM guards for naval specialists in this 30th Assault Unit which was under the command of the Director of Naval Intelligence. The personnel were trained as parachutists, and in such offbeat skills as safe blowing. They were also trained in security duties and street fighting. The Unit was organised in Troops, with 'A' Troop landing in Normandy on 6 June 1944, followed by 'A' and 'B' Troops on 10 June.

During the next ten months these Troops operated close to or ahead of the Allied advanced positions, and by March 1945 'A' Troop was moving towards Leipzig (in eastern Germany), 'B' Troop towards Hamburg and 'X' Troop to Keil, areas they all reached as German resistance crumbled. In April teams were finding minefield charts, ciphers, data on naval technical developments and other intelligence in German HQs. The Unit's HQ had moved close behind the Allied line of advance and was in Minden by May. In June the RM elements returned to the UK and were disbanded.

#### *RM Boom Patrol Detachment:*

Formed<sup>13</sup> on 6 July 1942 at Southsea, Hampshire, the Detachment trained in canoes, in long-distance swimming and shallow-water diving.<sup>14</sup> It mounted a raid on shipping in Bordeaux in December 1942 (see chapter 4). A unit went to the Mediterranean and mounted raids in 1943-4 (see chapter 7). The Detachment did development work on air-launched explosive motorboats but these were not used operationally. The personnel were later absorbed into the RM Special Boat Sections.

#### *Small Operations Group:*<sup>15</sup>

Formed on 12 June 1944 to co-ordinate small scale raiding parties in South East Asia Command, the Group was based in Ceylon (modern Sri Lanka) with an RM base staff by 1945. Under command were four COPPs, three SBS Groups and four Sea Reconnaissance Sections, all with army and naval personnel and RM Detachment 385. Units of the Group had carried out 174 operations by June 1945 and several after this date. The Group was disbanded in the autumn of 1945.

#### *RM Detachment 385:*<sup>16</sup>

Formed April-May 1944 at Havant, Hampshire, from volunteers, many of whom had served with MNBDO I and MNBDO II. Seven officers flew to Ceylon (modern Sri Lanka) for instruction from Lt-Col H. G. Hasler and were later to train the main body (112 all ranks) after their arrival in Ceylon on 7 July 1944. Between August 1944 and February 1945 the Detachment completed training. Operations were mounted for reconnaissance, deception and to land clandestine forces in Burma, Malaya, Thailand, and the Nicobar Islands between late February and mid-August 1945, in all 16 operations, some of which comprised more than one raiding party. After World War II some personnel were absorbed into the SBS when this Detachment was disbanded.

#### *Special Boat Section:*<sup>17</sup>

Army commandos had been using Folbot canoes since early in 1941 and Special Boat Sections of canoeists were formed. These carried out a number of recess and demolition raids in Europe and the Mediterranean. They were also used to collect agents, deliver clandestine stores and for beach reconnaissance in World War II. By July 1944 the SBS had been formed into 'A', 'B' and 'C' Groups under command of the Small Operations Group. After World War II the SBS became an RM unit, and although political factors have limited their use in peacetime, they are available as the Special Boat Squadron for beach surveys and similar work when required. The Squadron had three operational Sections of selected volunteers in the 1970s and continues.

SBS teams were deployed in the Falkland Islands from 1 May 1982 in operation 'Corporate' (see chap 11). In 1991 they made two raids into Iraq (see chap 13). At other times in the 1980s and 1990s they continued their secretive work but in 1997 their operational command was joined to that of the SAS.

#### *Raiding Squadrons RM*

After World War II an RM flotilla of LCP(L)s was based at Plymouth for training commandos in landings at the base of cliffs. They carried out much of their training at St Ives (Cornwall). A larger raiding craft was introduced in the early 1950s. This flotilla did not carry out any operations.

Experimental work in Malta with an inflatable rubber craft (IRC) during the 1950s led to the adoption of the Gemini for seaborne raiding. This craft was based on designs of the French Zodiac. In July 1967 No.1 Raiding Squadron RM was formed at Poole (Dorset) initially with 12 all ranks, to take over the training and operational commitments of 3 Cdo Brigade for raids. A second Squadron was formed on 2 December 1968 under the command of 45 Cdo RM but was disbanded after some months. In 1978 the RMR formed the 2nd Raiding Squadron, which continued in 1980. That year there was also a third Squadron, the 3rd Squadron RM in Hong Kong.

The 1st Raiding Squadron landed men from their rigid-raiders or from inflatables (launched from submarines on occasions). Sections were deployed with individual Commandos in many of the operations noted in the Commandos' histories. Typically in 1979 their exercises included: the Arctic Section's visit to Norway from January to March; a detachment in Holland (June); another in Scotland (September to October); and throughout the year the Squadron provided training facilities for other units

#### *Raiding Squadrons 1981 to 1997*

Since before 1981 1st Raiding Squadron had been attached to the Cdo Brigade's HQ & Sigs Sqn. It deployed to the Falkland Islands in 1982 (see chapter 11). And was deployed on exercises in Norway and elsewhere. In April 1994 it came under the command of 539 Assault Sqn.

A 'new' 2nd Raiding Squadron was an RMR unit formed in 1978 (see above). In a typical exercise it was in the Meditterean in 1992.

3rd Raiding Sqn formed for service in Hong Kong in 1978 (see above). 1 July 1988 ceased operations against illegal immigrants in Honk Kong, but some personnel remained in the Hong Kong for service with patrol boats.

*Miscellaneous*

Regarded as part of the Assault Squadrons, the Raiding Squadrons had the 6 June (Normandy 1944) as their memorable date.

## OTHER SUB-UNITS OF 3 CDO BRIGADE RM 1981-97

### Commando Brigade HQ & Signals Squadron

The Squadron had more rough and tumble about its activities than might normally be associated with staff work. Typically in 'Event 80' there was a competition between teams (1 officer, 1 NCO, 1 JNCO + 3 Mnes) from each troop or department in HQ & Sigs Sqn with 5 stages: gym test; orienteering; whaler racing; run with casualty to cross water; and pulling a 4-ton truck.

1982 Deployed with 3 Cdo Bde to Falkland Islands and in other years with the Brigade on Winter Deployments and on operation 'Haven'.

*Miscellaneous*

Memorable date: 21 May landing at San Carlos Water (in 1982)

### Communications Troop

Under command of HQ & Signals Sqn, this Troop operated in the main Net of for the Brigade's radio communications, and by 1997 also had satellite communications with the Permanent Joint Headquarters of the Rapid Reaction Force.

### Tactical Air Control Parties

These were deployed with HQ & Sigs Sqn or independently as TACP 605, 608(RMR) and 611. They served at various times in Belize, in Norway on Winter Deployments, in operations 'Corporate' and 'Haven'. Each TACP had an officer and two driver/radio operators.

### Air Defence Troop

This Troop was part of HQ and Signals Squadron RM although came to be regarded as an independent asset of the Brigade, until late in 1994 when it came — and remains — under command of 20 Cdo Bty RA. It normally deployed with the Squadron and subsequently with 20 Cdo Bty. But had also been deployed independently.

*Some examples of deployments*

1982 served in operation 'Corporate' summer of 1982.

1988 Detached for operations in support of the Fleet.

1991 Service in operation 'Heaven' during the Spring and annual firing practice in September on the missile range at Tenby (Dyfed) firing the allotted 16 Javelin missiles. Other live firing practice at Tenby included live firing GPMGs from vehicles and other weapons in air defence shoots while wearing full NBC kit for some exercises. By 1994 — if not before then — the Troop was regarded as a Brigade asset which could operate anywhere in which there was an air threat. In based in an old WW II camp on the Essequibo River in Guyana for jungle training and live firing, then visits to Trinidad, Puerto Rico (more live firing) and on to Tortola in the British Virgin Islands followed by five days R & R in Bermuda. In October deployed to Kuwait with 45 Cdo RM when the Troop's demonstrations of their Javelin missiles is said to have boosted British armament sales. In 1995 in Norway from first week in January attached to 20 Cdo Bty RA. By 1997 this Troop was equipped with shoulder-launched Javelin S15 missiles for local air defence.

### RM Police Troop

This Troop was part of HQ and Signals Squadron and normally deployed with the Squadron, but from time to time men were detached for special duties with other units. On Brigade operations the RM police provided the Brigadier's bodyguard, co-ordinated vehicle movements, sign posting routes into and out of beachheads and other combat areas.

1988 Detachment assisting with security at HM Prison Alma, Dettingen.

### Y Troop of Brigade HQ & Signals Squadron

Equipment with Electronic Warfare devices to interception and monitor an enemy's signals traffic.

### Brigade Patrol Troop of HQ & Signals Squadron

This Troop was to take over the M&AW Cadre's functions. It began a year long trial in July 1992. This proved successful and in the summer of 1993 the Patrol Troop was set up with a Recce Troop, the ML Cadre and an Admin section under a small HQ (OC Bde Patrol Tp + 3). The Recce Tp was commanded by a Lt Mountain Leader who had an HQ of 4 men. There were four Sections each commanded by a SNCO with two ML Cpls and three GD Marines. See G & L 1994 p 77 for full details. The Cadre continued to run courses in mountain climbing and cold weather warfare. The Recce Troop deployed to Switzerland in June 1993 for exercise *Ice Flip*. In January 1994 the whole Patrol Troop deployed to Norway. During this six weeks of training the Recce Troop made eight parachute jumps. The Cadre continued that year for a further three week in Norway. The Recce Troop by 1997 reportedly had six 4-man teams providing medium range reconnaissance for the Cdo Brigade.

## Amphibious Units

### 539 Assault Squadron

Formed as organic unit in 3 Cdo Bde on 1 April 1984 at the Royal William Yard in Plymouth (See chapter 12). The Squadron had an Amphibious Beach Unit (ABU) with a Beach Armoured Recovery Vehicle (BARV) and the ability to lay beach trackway with a specially adapted vehicle.

1988/89 Trials with Slingsby hovercraft.

1989 Squadron reviewed in their craft, when the salute was taken by Maj Gen N. F. Vaux CB, DSO at Plymouth and he presented them with a new ceremonial pennant.

1989/1990 After pre-winter training in Snowdonia mountains and craft training at ATTURM, deployed in Norway in January (later than usual) when the Squadron carried out various training exercises including trials with a new RRC replacement.

- 1990 LCs off Libya for evacuation if required.  
Hovercraft trials.
- 1991 Caribbean training.
- 1991 Exercise 'Final Nail' landed YO's and their 'enemy' from the Royal Scots on the beaches of Skye (Inner Hebrides) and experienced Force 10 gale which brought the exercise to an abrupt end. It became Force 12 as the LSL *Sir Belvedere* sailed back to Plymouth with 539 Sqn aboard.
- 1993 In June moved to a custom built base on the banks of the Plym River on the site of the old Turnchappel Wharf. This had 1,000m<sup>2</sup> of hard standing, 150m of jetty, 900m<sup>2</sup> of concrete slipway and a careening grid. The workshops and offices were housed in nearby buildings including five of stone and built in the early 19th century by French Prisoners of war. These and other services provided all that the Squadron required to be operational.
- 1994 By March the Squadron had four hovercraft and the first RRC Mk2s.
- 1995 The advance party for the winter deployment to Norway in 1995 arrived at Harstad soon after Christmas on the Squadron's 10th deployment to Norway, making recce of sites for various courses. The main body arrived and the new comers completed the Novice Ski and Survival Course, others completed the Winter Warfare Course (Infantry). LCU C2 fouled her keel on an underwater electric cable, requiring the aid of the Norwegian Coast Guard Service to extract the 'hook' in a sudden storm.
- 1996 Exercise 'Purple Star' in America and by the winter several craft had major refits.
- 1997 The Squadron had: LCUs capable of carrying a battle tank or 100 Marines and their equipment; LCVPs which were each able to carry a Land Rover plus a Light Gun (105-mm) or 30 fully equipped Marines; IRC to carry six Marines; RRC to carry 8 Marines; and four LCAC which were hovercraft each able to carry 64 Marines.

#### Miscellaneous

Memorable dates: 6 June landings in Normandy (in 1944) and 21 May landings in San Carlos Water (in 1982)

## AMPHIBIOUS UNITS NOT UNDER DIRECT COMMAND OF BRIGADE

### 1 Assault Squadron RM

This Squadron was the last of the Assault Squadrons to serve in HMS *Anzio* which paid-off in the early 1970s.

### 2 Assault Squadron RM

This Squadron normally served in one of the LPDs manning her Landing Craft and when she was under dockyard overhauls these crews assisted with training at RM Poole. The Squadron had an Amphibious Beach Unit (ABU) with a Beach Armoured Recovery Vehicle (BARV) and the ability to lay beach trackway with a specially adapted vehicle.

### 4 Assault Squadron RM

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1990 Re-embark in HMS *Fearless*

1991 in *Fearless* to Sevastopol 6 October 1991 in first visit to a Soviet Block port for 50 years.

1992 In *Fearless* on exercise with French Assault Ship

1994 In exercises 'Tartan Surprise' and 'Royal Dawn' in Scotland and April/May that year in exercises 'Resolute Response' and 'Dynamic Impact'

1995 with *Hermes* in America on exercise 'Purple Star'

Caribbean training

1997 Embarked in HMS *Fearless*.

### 6 Assault Squadron RM

This Squadron normally served in an LPD manning her Landing Craft and when she was under dockyard overhauls, these crews assisted with training at RM Poole. The Squadron had an Amphibious Beach Unit (ABU) with a Beach Armoured Recovery Vehicle (BARV) and the ability to lay beach trackway with a specially adapted vehicle.

1981-89 aboard HMS *Intrepid* at times when she was exercising or deployed — as in 'Corporate' 1982 — in amphibious roles.

1990 in HMS *Intrepid's* winter deployment from early January when some men undertook the Novice Ski and Survival Course with '45 RM' and then a Winter Warfare Course at Krakenes, Harstad. These were followed by NBC trials controlled by scientist from Porton Down. In February landed 45 Commando Group in the Tovik/Grov area. LCVPs operated from an FOB. Later that month landed 1 ACG and all its vehicles in less than 1½ hours. Remained in *Intrepid* until she returned to Portsmouth in October and Squadron returned to RM Poole. Disbanded 21 December 1990.

### 9 Assault Squadron RM

The Squadron was at Poole in the summer of 1997 and due to embark in HMS *Ocean* in March 1998. Their craft was to include four LCVP(5)s.

#### Miscellaneous

**Memorable dates for operational Landing craft Squadrons: 6 June landings in Normandy (in 1944) and 21 May landings in San Carlos Water (in 1982).**

## **RN Commando Squadrons**

### **845 and 846 Squadrons**

Squadron 845 was flying helicopters in the 1970s and in 1991 846 flew Chinook helicopters in operation 'Haven'. The two Squadrons each flew 10 Seaking support helicopters in 1997, which were flown by RN crews.

### **847 Squadron**

Was originally the Air Squadron of 2 Cdo Brigade (see above), moving to RNAS Yeovilton when command of this unit passed to CINCFLEET on 1 September 1995. In 1997 the Squadron flew six Lynx helicopters equipped with anti-tank missiles and eight Gazelle Helicopters primarily for observation work, all with RM crews.

## **HEADQUARTERS ROYAL MARINES (HQRN)**

From 1 April 1993 this Headquarters was formed under the command of the Commandant General and took over the functions of: CG's Department at the MOD; HQ Commando Forces; and HQ Training and Reserve Forces (HQ TRFRM). Initially based in HMS *Vernon* at Portsmouth, the staff moved to new buildings at HMS *Excellent* at Whale Island in 1996. Reporting to CG in this Headquarters were in 1997: the commander of 3 Cdo Bde; the commandant of CTC RM; the commandant of RM Poole; the CO of Comacchio Group; the commandant of the RM School of Music; trials unit ATTURM; the director of the RMR; 847 NAS; and the SBS which in 1997 came under a Special Forces HQ for operations but was administered as a unit under command of CG. The Lt Col commanding this HQ staff which included the Personnel Branch RM.

## **NAVAL PARTIES AND MISSIONS**

### **Naval Examination Service**

Marine signallers served in small ships of this Service, which examined merchantmen entering British ports in wartime.

### **Conferences 1919–1939**

Marines served as orderlies for many conferences, including the Washington Conference of 1922, when seven corporals were commended by the First Lord of the Admiralty, as they 'proved themselves equal to every ... emergency in difficult circumstances'.<sup>1</sup>

### **North Persian<sup>2</sup>/Caspian Flotilla<sup>3</sup>**

A small British army formation in 1918 had been assisting a local Russian force to hold a Turkish advance, which the Germans had hoped might reach Afghanistan. In August they were joined by an RN force which armed a number of Russian ships and that December prevented the Bolsheviks gaining an ice-free port on the Caspian Sea, a sea of 600 miles from north to south and up to 300 miles wide, with nearly 1,000 sizeable vessels on its waters in 1918. The flotilla flew the Imperial Russian ensign before 2 March 1919,<sup>2</sup> when it came under British command. The ships *Venture*, *Fox*, *Emile Nobel*, *Alla Vardi*, *Salva*, and *Bibi-Abat* had RMA/RMLI detachments, each with 11 to 16 Marines, commanded by sergeants or corporals. Other ships had British gunners — *Kruger* with RA field artillery, and *Zorcaster* and *Asia* with RN seamen gunners. RN crews operated the Flotilla's ships, which also included the *Windsor Castle*, the improvised seaplane carrier *Orlionock*, and *Sergei* which carried some of the Flotilla's 12 RN Coastal Motor Boats. The old ships of the Flotilla, however, were limited to a best speed of 9 knots. Livestock was carried to provide rations for 14 days, but the sheep often died from the cold in the first week at sea.

Ashore a force of Royal Marines had set up coast guns at Petrovsk (Makhachkala in 1980) on the western shores of the Caspian, several hundred miles north of Baku, and from 1918 had garrisoned this advanced base. After January 1919 the 160 Marines of this defence force were attacked several times, but held the port after street fighting.

At sea a typical action by *Emile Nobel* (3,799 tons) on 21 May 1919, when she was making a reconnaissance of Alexandrovsk (Fort Shevchenko in 1980). It began with her being hit by a 150-in shell. This killed 11 of her crew of 84<sup>5</sup> before she opened fire with her two 4-in QF guns. The flotilla then attacked the port and sank nine vessels. Allied aircraft — some 40 RAF planes supported the Flotilla — later drove the remaining Bolshevik ships from this port, and by the end of May the only armed Russian ships were in their Astrakhan base on the Volga estuary. But 13 improvised warships and a small force of aircraft could not control this sea, although they captured several Russian ships in August 1919 before handing the Flotilla over to the White Russians. The last Marines left Petrovsk on 2

September,<sup>6</sup> but before handing over the *Emile Nobel*, the breechblocks of her guns were thrown over the side, to disarm them.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Naval Mission to Siberia/Kama River Flotillas**

In 1917 some 600,000 tons of Allied war materials were a Vladivostok waiting to be shipped on the Trans-Siberian Railway, when an armistice was signed by Russia and Germany. A token Allied force was landed briefly in April 1918 to protect these supplies, and that summer more British, French, Japanese and American forces were landed.<sup>8</sup> By the autumn an armoured train was equipped by HMS *Suffolk* with one of her 6-in guns and 4 of her 12-pdrs. this train, with royal Marines from *Suffolk*'s detachment, was in action in support of Czech forces fighting the Russians at Tschima, after the train had made a journey of 6,105 miles from Vladivostok. When the guns were frozen up, the train withdrew to Omsk in Central Russia, where in March 1919 another 6-in gun was fitted. This gun, from HMS *Kent*, had been brought to Omsk by a Canadian unit. The *Suffolk* detachment was then replaced by Capt T. H. Jameson (later Major General, CBE, DSO) with 29 RMLI NCOs and privates. All were volunteers, accompanied by four RN specialists including a doctor.

They reached Perm on the Kama River on 28 April just as the ice was breaking, and within a week had mounted the 6-in gun from the train in a Russian steamer renamed *Kent*, and the second '6-in' in a barge named *Suffolk*. The steamer *Kent* sank three armed Soviet steamers on 23 May,<sup>9</sup> in an action 300 miles south of Perm. She fired Lyddite shells from an opening range of 8,100yds and closed to 4,000yds before the remaining Bolshevik ships retired. The barge *Suffolk* was moored to support the steamer *Kent* and six ships of the Omsk government which were with her. But once the Czech Legion decided to withdraw, resistance crumbled. The steamer and barge's guns were in action against artillery positions on the river bank during June, after the river levels fell. Later they withdrew to Perm. A Bolshevik agent in the steamer *Kent*'s Russian crew added to the RM Detachment's difficulties, for 'a small force ... in a foreign country ... [can find] that any lack of security may quickly undermine morale'.<sup>10</sup>

The British Government withdrew its support for the Omsk Government, and the Marines with great ingenuity and little help put the guns on railway flat-trucks, requisitioned an engine and set off for Vladivostok. Despite typhus and small pox among refugees, train wrecks and marauding bands of guerrillas, they reached this base in 52 days, on 18 August 1919, having suffered only minor casualties. The Japanese held the base until October 1922; but when HMS *Carlisle* left the port that November, she reported that there were no disturbances when Soviet forces entered the port.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Black Sea Operations**

A naval garrison of seamen and Marines was landed in December 1918 at Sevastopol in the Crimea, and was strengthened to nearly 500 all ranks by men of the 3rd RM Battalion<sup>12</sup> before being relieved by French troops later that month. Allied support for the White Russian forces continued into the spring of 1919, but after April the RN ships' help was limited and by June they were observing a strict neutrality.

#### **Upper Yangtze Guard**

Formed on 15 November 1927 with an officer and 10 other ranks from HMS *Vindictive*'s detachment, the Guard sailed up river to help protect merchant ships passing through the rapids of the Upper Yangtze (modern Change Jiang).<sup>13</sup> Other small detachments served in this Guard until 1928 or later.

#### **Harwich Auxiliary Patrol**

Formed from trawler crews in June 1940 with trawlers and other small vessels, the Patrol was in action against E-boats and German planes.<sup>14</sup> The crews were instructed in small arms and gunnery by nine RM sergeant pensioners.

#### **Dutch Schuytes**

Three of these<sup>15</sup> were commandeered by the Admiralty and two were commanded by RM officers — the first to command HM ships in World War II — with RM crews. They acted as Q-ships to counter E-boat attacks on shipping in the English Channel.

#### **Force W Fire Control Unit**

A number of Marines served in this unit as signallers in the latter part of 1945, if not before.

#### **Naval Port Parties (Normandy and North West Europe 1944–5)**

Four of these<sup>16</sup> were formed with RM personnel as well as naval ratings in March 1944, to operate captured ports and for boat duties, etc. in the Mulberry harbour; they also manned naval bases ashore.<sup>17</sup> They each had a repair element and communications parties.

The large party '1500' landed at Courseulles on 7 June 1944 with its repair element (NP 1526) and communications (NP 1518) — see chapter 6. The RM Passive Air Defence Section of '1500' was responsible for precautions against and repairs after any air raids, but also worked on salvaging craft. Marines of '1500's' Administrative Section fed men in the naval camp, while those who were telephonists and those who plotted movements on the HQ maps, worked in the HQ of '1500'. The boat crews were mainly RMs and the RM bomb disposal team cleared mines.

The second of the large parties, '1501' was based at Ouistreham with its repair element (NP 1528) and its communications (NP 1518). Later its personnel went to man the Naval HQ at Rouen, and then moved to Antwerp.

The first of the smaller parties, '1502' with a repair party '1531' and communications '1520A, B & C', was at Calais, but some elements were at Port-en-Bessin (1502A) and others at Ostend and Zeebrugge.

The second of the smaller parties, '1503' was at Boulogne with its repair element '1530' and communications as NP 1521.

NP 1686 with naval ratings and some Marines cleared Dieppe harbour of mines and obstructions in July 1944. NP 1715 when later in North West Europe included 324 RM Engineers. NP 1747 dismantled a V1 flying-bomb launching site in February 1945, and sent it to Chatham. NP 1749 with RM signallers was in Germany in the autumn of 1945.

### **Naval parties — ships' names 1944–50s**

Port parties at major bases were given ships' names and RM detachments, RM Landing Craft flotillas and SBS served in these formations, which often commanded more units than the numbered Naval Party, or the Port Party initially clearing a port or setting up a headquarters. The names were:

*Princess Amelia*, 1945 Europe; *Princess Irene*, 1946 Berlin; *Princess Louisa*, 1945–6 Brunsbüttel on river Elbe; *Royal Adelaide*, 1945–6 Tanning, on Eider estuary; *Royal Albert*, Berlin in 1945 and later, but by the 1950s had become the depot in an ex-German ship at Cuxhaven, near Hamburg; *Royal Alfred*, Kiel in 1945 and later; *Royal Caroline*, 1945–? Lübeck on the Baltic; *Royal Charles*, port parties at Le Havre and later at Calais in 1945; *Royal Harold* (NP 1742) in April 1945 at Kiel, later merged with NP 1743; *Royal James*, parties at Boulogne 1944–5; *Royal Prince* in 1945–6 at Emden, Lower Saxony and later name of a parent ship for all RN forces in Germany; *Royal William*, port parties at Cherbourg, France 1944–?

### **Naval Party Operation 'Grapple'**

In 1956 this party, No. 2512,<sup>18</sup> included a flotilla of RM LCMs and other Marines, about 56 in all, who were deployed in landing stores, and building roads, camps and other installations for the testing of the British hydrogen bombs in 1957 on Christmas Island in the Pacific. Their LST *Messina* had been modified to carry six LCMs launched by a boom crane.

### **Falkland Islands**

A small detachment of Royal Marines was maintained on these islands from the 1960s to 1982 as NP 8901 - see also chapter 10.

### **Other Naval Parties in World War II**

There were many naval parties in which RMs served as specialists or guards from time to time, and some included complete RM units described elsewhere in this Appendix. For example, Party 2402 included MOLCAB III.<sup>19</sup> Almost all Naval Parties are formed for a specific task lasting a relatively short period but occasionally — as in the Falklands up to 1982 — they are in commission for many years. In World War II the '800s' were mainly deployed in the Mediterranean, the '1500s' (see above) and '1600s' in North-West Europe, and the '4000s' included landing craft ferry crews in India and SEAC. The large NP 31 in India became '1031' in Rangoon, in a typical example of the renumbering of a party on its redeployment.

### **Carrier Borne Air (later Ground) Liaison Sections**

These<sup>20</sup> were formed in 1943 to carry out similar duties to those which Forward Observation Officers carried out in directing naval guns, but CBALs (Seabals) directed aircraft on to ground targets or work in intelligence teams. The RMs in these units were trained at Yeovilton RNAS by 1946. There were CBALs numbered in the 60s by this date, when 20 of them returned to the UK from the British Pacific Fleet. CBAL 51 was formed on 22 September 1944 but by 1947 CBAL 70 was an HQ at Yeovilton. The army had sponsored these Sections in 1943 and many included army officers, but by 1961 the Corps was unable to provide officers for training in this role, and the units continued as purely army Sections.

### **Beach Control Parties**

These Parties in World War II had been Royal Navy Commandos operating under command of a Beachmaster RN, who controlled the berthing at landing points and was in general responsible for the organisation of craft's beaching, coordinating this with the operational requirements as a beachhead developed. In July 1946 three officers and 37 other ranks were in training as half of a beach party to learn from RN experience. They were moved to Rosneath on the Clyde estuary but were reduced to a cadre of eight,<sup>21</sup> from which the knowledge of Beach Control Parties' work was retained and later expanded. The Parties had their equivalents in the LPDs of the 1990s, as a part of the Beach Units in Assault Squadron.

## SHIPS' DETACHMENTS

Many ships were laid up immediately after World War I, or, in the case of older vessels, had been stripped of their guns, but the lists below of capital ships and cruisers existing in 1919 but disposed of by 1932 indicate the Corps' commitment to naval gunnery at the end of that war. Details are given of displacement tonnage and the date of a ship's first inclusion in government financial estimates. See any standard reference books of naval ships, for details of the armament, but Royal Marines almost invariably manned at least one main turret and a number of secondary guns.

Detachment sizes are indicated by letter 'd' and RM band sizes by 'b', where these have been estimated the item is starred (\*). These figures are indicative only of the size of these units for several reasons. In the 1930s many detachments were as much as 25 per cent below their establishment strength, due to the shortage of manpower. The approved strengths for wartime service were some 35 per cent above those of peacetime. In some cases the actual strengths were even increased by 50 per cent after the outbreak of World War II as additional armaments were added. Further increases in weaponry during that War, led to further increases in detachment sizes and no doubt in band sizes, where musicians were needed for increased instrumentation in the T/S. Detachments were further increased on those ships acting as flagships.

The dates of a ship's completion and of its disposal are shown in parentheses, except for those disposed of before 1932. Not included are a number of ships on which Marines served briefly, including the gunboats in China, destroyers at Narvik, and depot ships and submarines on which individual Marines occasionally served.

### Battleships and Dreadnoughts of 1919, disposed of by 1932

**Majestic-class** (14,900 tons) of 1894 — d-and-b 80\*, in *Caesar*, *Hannibal*, *Jupiter*, *Magnificent*, *Prince George* and *Victorious*.

**Canopus-class** (12,950 tons) of 1896 — d-and-b 100\*, in *Albion*, *Canopus*, *Glory*, and *Vengeance*.

**Formidable-class** (15,000 tons) of 1898 — d-and-b 100\* in *Implacable*.

**London-class** (15,000 tons) of 1898 — d-and-b 100\* in *London* and *Venerable*.

**Duncan-class** (14,000 tons) of 1898 — d-and-b 100\* in *Albermarle*, *Duncan* and *Exmouth*.

**Queen-class** (15,000 tons) of 1901 — d-and-b 100\* in *Queen* and *Prince of Wales*.

Purchased from Chile *Swiftsure* (11,800 tons) of 1902 — d and b not traced.

**King Edward-class** (16,350 tons) of 1902 — d-and-b 100\* in *Africa*, *Commonwealth*, *Dominion*, *Hibernia*, *Hindustan* and *Zealand*.

**Lord Nelson-class** (16,500 tons) of 1904 — d-and-b 100\*

**Dreadnought** (17,900 tons) of 1906 — d and b not traced.

**Temeraire-class** (18,000 tons) of 1907 — d-and-b 96 in *Bellerophon*, *Superb* and *Temeraire*.

**St Vincent-class** (19,250 tons) of 1909 — d-and-b 99 in *Collingwood* and *St Vincent*.

**Neptune** (19,900 tons) of 1909 — d-and-b 97.

**Colossus-class** (20,000 tons) of 1909 — d-and-b 99 in *Colossus* and *Hercules*.

**Orion-class** (22,500 tons) of 1912 — d-and-b 97 in *Conqueror*, *Monarch*, *Orion* and *Thunder* (see also post-1932).

**King George-class** (23,000 tons) of 1911 — d-and-b 97 in *Ajax*, *Centurion* (in 1913 used as radio controlled target ship, see also post-1932) and *King George V*. When these were flagships the d-and-b was 107.

**Iron Duke-class** (25,000 tons) of 1912 — d 109 and b 24 in *Benbow*, *Emperor of India*, *Iron Duke* (see also post-1932) and *Marlborough* (see also post-1932).

### Battleships 1932-1960

**Iron Duke** — see above — (1912-46 but disarmed c1922)

**Centurion** — see above — used as a Mulberry blockship in 1944.

**Queen Elizabeth-class** (31,100 tons) of 1912-13 — d 115 and b 24 in *Barham* (1915-41, sunk), *Queen Elizabeth* (1915-48), *Warspite* (1915-47, with a d 200 and b 24 at times in World War II), *Malaya* (1916-48) and *Valiant* (1916-48).

**Royal Sovereign-class** (29,150 tons) of 1913-14 — d 125 and b 22 in *Resolution* (1916-48), *Revenge* (1916-48), *Royal Sovereign* (1916-1943 when secondary armament was reduced, 1944 to USSR) and *Ramillies* (1917-48).

**Nelson** (33,500 tons) and **Rodney** (33,900 tons) both of 1922 — d 185 and b 20 (1927-49 and 1927-48) respectively.

**King George V-class** (35,000 tons) of 1936-7 — d-and-b 350 in *King George V* (1950-48), *Duke of York* (1941-58), *Prince of Wales* (1941 and sunk that year), *Anson* (1942-58) and *Howe* (1942-58).

**Vanguard** (44,500 tons) of wartime (1940) but not built until later — d-and-b 350, for Royal tour in 1947 the band was increased to 50\* (1946-60)

### Battle-Cruisers

**Invincible-class** (17,250 tons) of 1906 — d-and-b 86 in *Indomitable* (1908-21) and *Inflexible* (1908-21).

**Improved Invincible-class** (18,750 tons) of 1909 — d-and-b 86 in HMAS *Australia* (1912-24) and *New Zealand* (1912-22).

**Lion-class** (26,350) of 1909 — d-and-b 88 in *Lion* (1919-24) and *Princess Royal* 1912-22. When these were flagships, the d-and-b was 94.

**Tiger** (28,500 tons) of 1911 — d-and-b 115 (1914-32).

**Renown-class** of world War I — d-and-b 157\* in *Renown* (1916-48) and *Repulse* (1916-1941 sunk).

**Hood** (42,100 tons) — d 135\* and b 17 (1920-41 sunk).

### Capital ships' service in World War II

*Barham* was torpedoed while on Atlantic patrol on 28 December 1939, but reached Liverpool. In November 1940 she joined the Mediterranean Fleet and was in action at Cape Matapan in March 1941. She was later sunk by torpedoes while exercising off Egypt when doing 17 knots, only 300 of her crew of 1,150 were saved.

*Queen Elizabeth* was in action off Crete in May 1941, but on 19 December that year was heavily damaged while in Alexandria, Egypt, by 'human' torpedoes. She was recommissioned at Devonport (Plymouth) in July 1943 after returning from extensive repairs in America. She arrived at Ceylon on 28 January 1944, to support air strikes against Sabang and Sourabata, before going to South Africa for a refit that winter. As flagship of the 3rd Battle Squadron, in January 1945 she again bombarded Sabang and operated against other Japanese island defences, before sailing for the UK on 12 July 1945.

*Warspite* sailed from the Mediterranean to join the Home Fleet in 1939, returned to the 'Med' in 1940, but was recalled for the defence of Norway. In the 2nd Battle of Narvik she bombarded shore batteries. In May she again returned to the 'Med'. During early 1941 she bombarded North African ports, but in May her starboard secondary armament was wrecked by bombs. After refit in the USA, she was flagship of the Eastern Fleet, and early in 1943 she covered convoys to Australia. Later she supported landings at Sicily and Salerno, but on 16 September she was hit by a German glider-bomb, flooded and had to be towed to Malta. During 1944, despite having one turret out of commission, she covered the Normandy landings but on 13 June when returning to UK to replace her worn gun barrels, she hit a mine. When repaired she took part in the Walcheren landings among other bombardments.

*Malaya* covered the third Canadian troop convoy, arriving in the Clyde on 7 February 1940. She went to the Mediterranean to cover Malta convoys and take part in North African bombardments. On 9 February 1941, with *Renown*, she bombarded Genoa. When escorting convoy SL68 to Sierra Leone in West Africa, she was sighted by German capital ships, which then left the area. After refitting in the USA, she joined the Eastern Fleet in 1944 and was serving in the East Indies during 1945.

*Valiant* completed an extensive refit in December 1939 before sailing to the West Indies. She covered Atlantic convoys and the passage of troops from Norway in June 1940, before sailing to the 'Med' in August. In December she bombarded Valona. In March 1941 she was in the battle of Cape Matapan, where she fired 62 15-in shells and got about 20 hits on Italian ships. On 21 April she fired more than 200 shells into Tripoli, and later escaped any major bomb damage off Crete and attacks from 'human' torpedoes. After refitting in the USA, she joined the Eastern Fleet in January 1944, and that spring through to the summer, she bombarded Japanese defences on various islands. But on 8 August she was accidentally sunk while in a floating dock at Trincomalee. Reciting after this mishap was not completed, although she reached to UK after temporary repairs.

*Resolution* covered the escorts of bullion convoys to Canada, then served with the Halifax Escort Force before going to Dakar, in West Africa in September 1940. There she was hit by four heavy shells and a French torpedo. After repairs she joined Force H in 1941, escorting convoys in the Mediterranean. By March 1942 she was in Ceylon with the Eastern fleet. In February 1943 she covered troop convoys to Australia, before returning to the Clyde to become the Depot Ship in the Gareloch which leads to the Clyde estuary.

*Revenge* was also in the bullion convoy of October 1939, sailing to Canada and later covered Atlantic troop convoys. In October 1940 she bombarded Cherbourg, while she was being held in home waters for some months, against the possible breakout of German capital ships from Brest. She joined the Halifax Escort Force in the summer of 1941, and later sailed to join the Eastern Fleet, arriving in Ceylon in March 1942, and early in 1943 she covered convoys to Australia.

*Royal Oak* was in the Home Fleet based on Scapa Flow, when U-47 torpedoed her at anchor on 14 October 1939. She capsized and sank in 13 minutes with the loss of 834 officers and men, including most of her RM detachment.

*Royal Sovereign* was in the Home Fleet in 1939 and joined the Halifax Escort Force in 1940. She was with the Eastern Fleet in 1941-2. Her secondary armament of 12 6-in guns was reduced to 10 in 1943. She was lent to the USSR from 30 May 1944 until she was returned to the UK in 1948 or 1949.

*Ramillies* was in the Mediterranean Fleet in September 1939, but escorted Australian troops to the Red Sea in January 1940. On 8 February 1941, after joining the Atlantic force covering convoy escorts, she was covering convoy HX106 when *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* sighted her and broke off their intended action. She supported the Madagascar landings and her Marines were put ashore behind the French lines (see chapter 4). Shortly after these landings, she was torpedoed by a Japanese midget submarine, but there was only one minor casualty. After temporary repairs in Durban, South Africa, she sailed for a refit in Plymouth. On 6 June 1944 she took part in the Normandy bombardment and later bombarded Toulon and Port Cros in support of landings in southern France.

*Nelson* was built to limits set by the Washington Treaty. In September 1939 she was flagship of the Home Fleet. On 4 December she struck a magnetic mine while entering Loch Ewe on the west coast of Scotland. Repaired by September 1940, she was searching for enemy raiding ships in Norwegian waters. In March 1941 she covered the army commandos' second series of landings on the Lofoten Islands, then she escorted troop convoys to Cape Town, before returning to Gibraltar to join Force H in July. On 27 September she was hit by an enemy aircraft's torpedo, forcing her return to the UK for repairs and a refit. The following April (1942) she joined the Home Fleet; in May she escorted a convoy to Freetown, West Africa, and in August she escorted the last convoy to Malta, before its relief from constant air attack. She briefly returned to home waters before joining Force H, and was its flagship during the Sicily landings. In November she returned to the UK. In June 1944 she carried out 21 bombardments in support of the Normandy landings, being slightly damaged by a mine during the last of these. On 24 June she sailed for an extensive refit in the USA. On its completion in January 1945, she returned to the UK, and arrived in the Far East early in July to support operations in Malaya. On 3 September the surrender of the local Japanese in the Penang area was received aboard *Nelson*; and on 12 September at Singapore, the surrender of Japanese forces in South East Asia was signed aboard her. She sailed for home on 13 November.

*Rodney*, like *Nelson*, was built to limits set by the Washington Treaty. She was with the home Fleet in September 1939, and on 8 April 1940, while with *Valiant* off Bergen, Norway, she was hit by a 500kg bomb during three hours of air attacks. In June she was in the covering force protecting convoys from Norway, and the following November she joined a force covering Atlantic convoys. She was detached from this work in late May 1941 to join *King George V* in hunting the *Bismark*. After this she refitted in America, returning to the UK in November. During the following months she operated off Norway, positioned to capture raiding ships in Hvalfiord among other waters. During 1942 she covered convoys to Malta, bombarded Fort Santon and in 1943 was with Force 4 to cover the landings in Sicily. In June 1944 she was one of the bombardment force off the Normandy coast, successfully breaking up counterattacks on the British 3 Division; in July she supported an army offensive near Caen; and later that month destroyed much of the battery of heavy coast guns on Alderney in the Channel Islands. By September she was covering convoys to Russia and from 30 November 1944 to April 1945, she was the flagship of the Home Fleet.

*King George V*, like others of her class, had 14-in guns with a better penetrative power, range and rate of fire than the older 15-in guns. She joined the Home Fleet in October 1940, covered the March 1941 landings on the Lofoten Islands, North Norway, and was Admiral Tovey's flagship in the action against the *Bismark*. During 1942 she covered Atlantic convoys and searched for raiders before joining Force H in May 1943 at Gibraltar. Later that year she covered the Sicily landings and carried out shore bombardments. After a refit in the UK during February to July 1944, she sailed to join the Pacific Fleet in October. Early in 1945 she was in a force bombarding Japanese island aerodromes as part of the Okinawa operations, in July she bombarded installations on the Japanese mainland, and on 2 September she was in Tokyo for the Japanese surrender. After refitting in Australia, she took the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester to Tasmania in January 1946, before returning to the UK. She was flagship of the Home Fleet during the latter part of 1946. After a long refit she became a training ship but in 1950 she was laid up, being one of the first capital ships to be 'sealed for preservation'.

*Duke of York* she — like the *KGV* — had powerful 14-in guns. She joined the Home Fleet on 6 November 1941 and carried the flag of the second-in-command, taking the Prime Minister to America in December. During early 1942 she covered convoys to Russia, before joining Force H. She was flagship of this Force during the North African landings in November 1942 but returned to the UK for a refit that winter. On 8 May 1943 she became the flagship of the Home fleet. That December she was in action against the *Scharnhorst*. She supported aircraft carriers in strikes against *Tirpitz* in a Norwegian fjord before she began a long refit in September. This was to prepare her for operations in the Far East. In July 1945 she arrived at Sydney and was at Manus on 15 August. She returned to the UK in the summer of 1946 and that December became the flagship of the Home Fleet. She was transferred to the Reserve Fleet in April 1949.

*Prince of Wales* was in action against the *Bismark* in May 1941, before she had completed her work-up cruise. In August she took Prime Minister Churchill to Newfoundland for meetings with President Roosevelt. She returned to the UK, then had a brief spell in the Mediterranean, where on 24 September 1941 she shot down seven planes. She again returned to home waters, before sailing for Singapore as flagship of the Eastern Fleet. On 10 December, within days of her arrival, she was sunk by Japanese aircraft.

*Anson* joined the Home Fleet in April 1942, and, as flagship of the second-in-command, she covered convoys to Russia. She also protected aircraft carriers during strikes in 1943 against shipping in Norwegian waters, and in February 1944 against the *Tirpitz*. In April 1945 she sailed from Scapa to work-up in the 'Med' before going to the Far East. There she was with the force reoccupying Hong Kong and returned to the UK in July 1946. After a spell as flagship of the Training Squadron she was laid up.

*Howe* arrived in Scapa in August 1942 for her work-up. After covering convoys to Russia and patrolling northern waters against potential raiders, she joined Force H in the early summer of 1943. She was based on Algiers (modern El Djazair) with *KGV*, she covered Mediterranean convoys and carried out shore bombardments. In October 1943 she returned to the UK for a refit in preparation for sailing to the Far East. She arrived there in June 1944, and that summer bombarded Japanese railway workshops in Sumatra, in modern Indonesia. In December 1944 she sailed from Ceylon as flagship of the Pacific Fleet. In the late spring and early summer of 1945 she took part in the bombardments of aerodromes and other Japanese island defences, sailing in June, via Australia, for a refit in South Africa. In late September 1946 she relieved *Nelson* in the East Indies Fleet before sailing for the UK that December. She was later flagship of the home Fleet's Second Battle Squadron before joining the Training Squadron, and was laid up in 1951.

*Vanguard* was not completed until after World War II, she took part in a major Royal tour in 1946–7.

*Battle-cruisers* in the 1920s carried out a number of tours showing the flag around the World. Lord Jellicoe and his staff had a year-long cruise from 21 February 1919 to 2 February 1920 in *New Zealand*. She sailed 33,000 nautical miles visiting India, Australasia, USA, Cuba and other countries on this tour. *Renown* took the Prince of Wales on his tours to the USA, Canada and Australia in 1920–21, and the following year took him on visits to India and Japan, in one of several major cruises before World War II.

*Renown* in 1939 was modernised with new engines. In the early months of World War II she was based on Freetown, West Africa, and with *Ark Royal* was searching for surface raiders making for the South Atlantic. She reached Montevideo, Uruguay, soon after the *Graf Spee* was scuttled. In 1940 she was Vice-Admiral Whitworth's flagship off Norway and on 9 April was in action against the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* (see chapter 3). She later joined Force H as Admiral Somerville's flagship. In April 1942 she escorted the carrier USS *Wasp* with 41 RAF Spitfires aboard, from the Clyde to Malta. She took Prime Minister Churchill to the Quebec conference in September 1943 and in November took him to the Teheran Conference. She sailed in December to join the Eastern Fleet. During 1944 she bombarded Japanese installations, including on 25 July those at Sabang on Sumatra and others in the Nicobar Islands bombarded in November. She had returned to the UK by August 1945 when King George VI met President Truman aboard *Renown* in Plymouth Sound.

*Repulse* carried the Prince of Wales on his South American tour in 1925. She had a major refit from 1936 to 1938 but was not 'modernised'. In September 1939 she and *Hood* formed the Home Fleet Battle Squadron. By mid-February 1940 she had been at sea for 130 days in covering Atlantic convoys. She was in the Far East at the time of the outbreak of hostilities with Japan, and was sunk by aircraft on 10 December 1941.

*Hood* in 1939 was with the Home Fleet, she was transferred to Force H as Admiral Somerville's flagship on 24 May 1941. On 24 May 1941 she blew up after being hit by a salvo from *Bismark*. There were few survivors and all the RM detachment was lost.

### Cruisers in 1919 disposed of by 1932

Detachment sizes are indicated by letter 'd' and RM band sizes by 'b', where these have been estimated the item is starred (\*).

*Endymion*, *Gibraltar*, *Grafton*, *Theseus* (7,350–7,700 tons) of 1891 — d 50\* b 15\*.

*Crescent* and *Royal Arthur* (7,700 tons) of 1891 — d 50\* and b 15\*.

*Astrala*, *Charybdis*, *Forte*, *Fox* and *Hermione* light cruisers (4,360 tons) and *Sappho* (3,440 tons) of pre-1894 — d 30\* and b 15\*.

**Eclipse-class** (5,600 tons) of 1894 — d 34\* and b 15\* in *Diana*, *Doris*, *Eclipse*, *Isis*, *Juno*, *Minerva* and *Talbot*.

**Diadem-class** (11,000 tons) of 1895 — d 60\* and b 15\* in *Amphitrite*, *Europa* and *Diadem*.

*Pelorus*, *Prosperine* and *Pyramis* (2,135–2,220 tons) light cruisers of 1869–9 — d 30\* and b 12\*.

**Cressy-class** (12,000 tons) of 1898 — d 60\* and b 15\* in *Bacchante*, *Aerialist* and *Sutler*.

**Drake-class** (14,100 tons) of 1898 g d 60\* and b 15\* in *King Alfred*.

*Challenger*, *High flyer* and *Hyacinth* (5,600–5,915 tons) light cruisers of 1900 — d 40\* and b 15\*.

**Monmouth-class** (10,000 tons) of 1900 known as 'County' class — d-and-b 100\* in *Berwick*, *Cornwall*, *Cumberland*, *Donegal*, *Essex*, *Kent*, *Lancaster* and *Suffolk*.

light cruisers *Amethyst*, *Diamond*, *Sapphire* and *Topaze* (3,000 tons) of 1902 — d-and-b 40\*.

**Devonshire-class** (10,850 tons) of 1902 — d-and-b 80\* in *Antrim*, *Caernarvon* and *Devonshire*.

*Attentive* (2,895 tons) light cruiser of 1903 — d-and-b 40\*

*Foresight* and *Forward* (2,850 tons) light cruisers of 1903 — d-and-b 40\*.

*Sentinel* and *Skirmisher* (2,895 tons) light cruisers of 1903 — d-and-b 40\*.

**Duke of Edinburgh-class** (13,550 tons) of 1903 — d-and-b 80\* in *Duke of Edinburgh*.

**Warrior-class** (13,550 tons) of 1904 — d-and-b 82\* in *Achilles*.

**Minotaur-class** (14,600 tons) of 1905 — d-and-b 98 in *Minotaur* and *Shannon*.

*Bellona* and *Boadicea* (3,300 tons) light cruisers of 1907 — d-and-b 35\*.

**Bristol-class** (4,800 tons) of 1908 — d-and-b 45\* in *Bristol*, *Glasgow*, *Gloucester* and *Liverpool*.

*Blanche* and *Blonde* (3,400 tons) light cruisers of 1909 — d-and-b 40\*.

**Weymouth-class** (5,250 tons) of 1909 — d-and-b 50\* in *Dartmouth*, *Weymouth* and *Yarmouth*.

*Active* and *Fearless* (3,440 tons) light cruisers of 1910–11 — d-and-b 40\*.

**Chatham-class** (5,400 tons) of 1911 — d-and-b 60\* in *Chatham* and *Dublin*.

*Lowestoft* (5,400 tons) light cruiser of 1912 — d-and-b 60\*.

*Aurora*, *Galatea*, *Inconstant*, *Royalist* and *Undaunted* (3,520 tons) light cruisers of 1912 — d-and-b 40\*. *Aurora* to Royal Canadian Navy in 1920.

*Conquest* and *Cordelia* (3,800 tons) light cruisers of 1913 — d-and-b 40\*.

### Cruisers 1919 to 1979

(Several of these are not ships in a 'class' and therefore appear in italics with **cruiser** on first lines.)

**Caroline-class** (3,750 tons) of 1913–14 — d-and-b 40\* in *Crayford* (1915–31), *Cleopatra* (1915–31) and *Conquest* (1915–30)

**Cambrian-class** (3,750 tons) of 1914–15 — d-and-b 40\* in *Calliope* (1915–31), *Champion* (1915–34), *Cambrian* (1916–47, latterly, RNVR Depot ship), *Canterbury* (1916–34) and *Constance* (1916–36).

*Centaur* (3,750 tons) cruiser of 1915 — d-and-b 40\* (1916–33).

*Concord* (3,750 tons) cruiser of 1915 — d-and-b 40\* (1916–35).

Improved (World War I) **Birmingham-class** (9,996 tons) of 1915–16 — d 94 and band 15 in *Vindictive* (1918–46 completed as an aircraft carrier but converted in 1925), *Hawking* (1919–48), *Raleigh* (1919–22, wrecked), *Frobisher* (1919–48) and *Effingham* (1925–40, wrecked).

**Caledon-class** (4,180 tons) of 1916 — d-and-b 50\* in *Caledon* (1917–48, modified as AA cruiser), *Calypso* (1917–42, sunk) and *Caradoc* (1917–46 latterly as depot ship).

**Dauntless-class** (4,850 tons) know as D-class of 1916–18 — d 51 and b 13 in *Danae* (1918–44, Mulberry blockship), *Dauntless* (1918–47), *Dragon* (1918–44, Mulberry blockship), *Delhi* (1919–48), *Dunedin* (1919–41, sunk), *Durban* (1921–44, Mulberry blockship), *Despatch* (1922–46) and *Diomedes* (1922–46 with Royal New Zealand Navy).

**Carlisle-class** (4,200 tons) — d-and-b 60\* in *Carlisle* (1918–45, modified as an AA cruiser), *Cairo* (1919–42, sunk), *Calcutta* (1919–1941, sunk), *Colombo* (1919–1948, modified as an AA cruiser) and *Capetown* (1922–46, modified as AA cruiser).

**Ceres-class** (4,290 tons) of 1917–18 — d-and-b 60\* in *Cardiff* (1917–46, training ship from 1940), *Ceres* (1917–46, modified as an AA cruiser), *Curlew* (1917–40, sunk had been modified as an AA cruiser), *Coventry* (1918–42, sunk had been modified as an AA cruiser) and *Curacao* (1918–42, sunk).

**E-class** (7,550 tons) 1918 — d 90\* and b 11 in *Emerald* (1926–48) and *Enterprise* (1926–46).

**Cruiser-minelayer** (6,740 tons) of 1921–2 — d 30\* in *Adventure* (1926–47, became repair ship in 1944).

**Kent-class** (9,800 tons) of 1924 — d 70 and b 15 in *Berwick* (1928–48), *Cornwall* (1928–42, sunk), *Cumberland* (1928–59), *Kent* (1928–48), *Suffolk* (1928–49), *Australia* and *Canberra* both with Royal Australian Navy from 1927).

**Dorsetshire-class** (9,000–9,925 tons) of 1926 — d-and-b 92 in *Dorsetshire* (1930–42, sunk) and *Norfolk* (1930–50).

*York* (8,250 tons) cruiser of 1927 — d-and-b 80\* (1930–41, sunk).

**London-class** (9,750 tons) of 1928 — d-and-b 100 in *Devonshire* (1919–45), *London* (1929–50), *Shropshire* (1929–49, with Royal Australian Navy from 1943) and *Sussex* (1929–49).

*Exeter* (8,300 tons) of 1928 — d-and-b 86\* (1931–42, sunk).

**Leander-class** of 1929 — d 61 and b 17 in *Achilles* (1933–48), *Leander* (1933–49), *Neptune* (1934–41, sunk), *Orion* (1934–48), *Ajax* (1935–49), *Sydney* and *Hobart* (both with Royal Australian Navy from 1934).

**Arethusa-class and Improved Arethusa-class** of 1932 — d 52 and b 13 in *Arethusa* (1935–50), *Galatea* (1935–41, sunk), *Penelope* (1936–44, sunk) and *Aurora* (1937–48).

**Amphion-class** (7,000 tons) of 1932 — d-and-b 65\* in *Amphion* (1936–9 transferred to Royal Australian Navy as HMAS *Perth*, sunk 1942) and *Apollo* (1936–9 transferred to Royal Australian Navy as HMAS *Hobart*).

**Southampton-class** (9,000 tons) of 1933 — d 60 and b 18, with wartime detachment raised to 80 in *Southampton* (1937–41, sunk), *Birmingham* (1937–60), *Glasgow* (1937–58), *Liverpool* (1937–58), *Newcastle* (1937–58), *Sheffield* (1937–67), *Gloucester* (1938–41, sunk) and *Manchester* (1938–42, sunk). **Belfast-class** (10,000 tons) of 1936 — d-and-b 100\* in *Belfast* (1939–40) and *Edinburgh* (1939–42, sunk).

**Dido-class** (5,450 tons) of 1936 — d 65\* and b 18 in *Dido* (1940–58), *Aerialist* (1940–58), *Hermione* (1940–2, sunk), *Phoebe* (1940–56), *Charybdis* (1941–43, sunk), *Cleopatra* (1941–58), *Sirius* (1941–56), *Scylla* (1941–50), *Argonaut* (1942–56) and *Bonaventure* (1940–1, sunk).

**Mauritius- and Fiji-classes** (8,000 tons) of 1937–9 — d 104 and b 18 in *Fiji* (1940–1, sunk), *Kenya* (1940–62), *Mauritius* (1940–65), *Nigeria* (1940–54 to India), *Trinidad* (1940–2, lost), *Bermuda* (1942–65), *Gambia* (1942–3, to RNZN), *Jamaica* (1942–60); the following of 3-turret design (8,800 tons) *Ceylon* (1940–57), *Newfoundland* (1942–59 on her last cruise d 90 and b 25) and *Uganda* (1942–44 to RCN).

**Cruiser-minelayers** (2,650 tons) of 1938 — d-and-b none in *Abdiel* (1940–43, sunk), *Latona* (1940–41, sunk), *Manxman* (1940–63, became a support ship), *Welshman* (1940–43, sunk), *Apollo* (1943–65) and *Ariadne* (1943–65).

**Later Dido-class** (5,770 tons) of early 1940s — d-and-b 80\* in *Bellona* (1942–48, to RNZN), *Black Prince* (1943–48, to RNZN), *Royalist* (1943–58, to RNZN), *Spartan* (1943–44, sunk) and *Diadem* (1944–56, to Pakistan).

**Minotaur-class** (8,000 tons) of early 1940s — d 100\* and b 20 in *Minotaur* (1944 to RCN), *Swiftsure* (1944–62) and *Superb* (1945–60).

**Tiger-class** (8,885) of early 1940s but completion deferred and redesigned with 40 Sea-cat missiles — d-and-b 30\* in *Lion* (1958–74), *Tiger* (1958–77) and *Blake* (1959–79).

#### Fleet and Light Aircraft Carriers

*Furious* (22,450 tons) of 1915 — d-and-b, no trace

**Courageous-class** (22,500 tons) of 1915 — in 1938 d c100 b 19 in *Courageous* (1917–19, sunk) and *Glorious* with 115 Mnes (and Band?) (1917–40, sunk).

*Argus* (14,450 tons) of 1916 — d-and-b 80\*

*Hermes* (10,850 tons) of 1916 — d-and-b 60\* (1923–42, sunk).

*Eagle* (22,600 tons) of 1917 — d100\* and b 20\* (1923–42, sunk).

*Ark Royal* (22,600 tons) Fleet Carrier of 1934 — d 100\* and b 20\* (1938–41, sunk).

**Illustrious-class** (23,000 tons) Fleet Carriers of 1936–37 — d 34 and b 19 in *Formidable* (1940–53), *Illustrious* (1940–56) and *Victorious* (1940–61).

**Indomitable-class** (23,000 tons) Fleet Carriers of 1937–39 — d-and-b 128 in *Indomitable* (1941–55), *Indefatigable* (1944–55) and *Implacable* (1944–55).

**Hermes-class** (23,300 tons) Fleet Carriers of early-1940s, but completion deferred — d-and-b 62 in *Centaur* (1953–64), *Hermes* (1953 and see Commando Carriers), *Albion* (1954 and see Commando Carriers), *Bulwark* (1954 and see Commando Carriers).

**Ark Royal-class** (36,800 tons) Fleet Carriers of early-1940s — d-and-b 60\* in *Eagle* (1951–70) and *Ark Royal* (1955–78)

**Colossus-class** (14,000 tons) Light Fleet Carriers of early-1940s — d-and-b not traced in *Colossus* (1944–46, to France), *Glory* (1945–58), *Ocean* (1945–56), *Venerable* (1945–48), *Vengeance* (1945–56, to Brazil), *Theseus* (1946–57), *Triumph* (1946–54) and *Warrior* (1946–58).

**Majestic-class** (14,000 tons) Light Fleet carriers of early-1940s — d-and-b not traced in *Magnificent* (1944 to RCN), *Hercules* (1946–61, to India), *Leviathan* 1946, not completed), *Sydney* and *Melbourne* (1949 and 1955 both to RAN), *Powerful* (1956, completed as *Bonaventure* for RCN).

#### Escort Carriers

These did not normally carry RM detachments but RM officers with FAA squadrons were embarked from time to time. The first five ships were converted merchantmen or supply ships, including *Avenger* (sunk 1942), *Audacity* (sunk 1941) and *Dasher* (sunk 1943). Later escort carriers were C-35 cargo ships converted in building at American yards, 36 of these ships came into service in 1942–3 and were returned to America in 1945–6.

#### Monitors

**Ex-Brazilian order** (1,260 tons) of 1914 — d-and-b 40\* in *Humber* (1914–20), *Mersey* (1914–1919) and *Severn* (1914–22).

**14-inch class** (6,150 tons) of 1914 — d 80\* in *Abercrombie* (1915–27), *Havelock* (1915–27) and *Roberts* (1915, used for trials after 1919).

**Marshal-class** (6,670 tons) of 1914 — d 80\* in *Marshal Ney* (1915–57) and *Marshal Soult* (1915–46), after 1920 both monitors used as depot or drill ships.

**12-inch class** (5,900 tons) of 1915 but several later fitted with 18-in guns — d 80\* in *Earl of Peterborough* (1915–22), *General Wolfe* (1915–22, latterly 18-in gun), *Lord Clive* (1915–22, latterly 18-in gun and used for gun trials after 1920), *Prince Eugene* (1915–22), *Prince Rupert* (1915, depot ship *Pembroke* from 1922), *Sir John More* (1915–21) and *Sir Thomas Picton* (1915–21).

**Ex-Norwegian order** (5,700 tons) of 1915 — d 40\* in *Gorgon* (1918, used for trials after 1920).

**9.2-inch class** (540 tons) of 1915 — d not traced in *M16* to *M26* (11 monitors built 1915 and all decommissioned by about 1922).

**6-inch class** (355 tons) of 1915 — d 30\* in *M29* to *M 33* (five monitors all built from 1915 and sold or converted in 1920–22).

**2nd 15-inch class** (8,000 tons) of 1915 — d 90\* in *Erebus* (1916–46, additional guns added in World War II) and *Terror* (1916–41, sunk).

**3rd 15-inch class** (7,200 tons) of 1939–40 — d-and-b 120\* in *Roberts* (1941–65, latterly as drill ship), *Abercrombie* (1943–54, latterly as drill ship, etc.).

### Landing Ships

See Minor Craft Unit history summaries for examples of World War II LS Infantry, as their detachments were LC Flotillas. Marine LC crews also served on detachment to LSTs in 1945–6, and from time to time after World War II on Landing Ships such as: *Rocksand* (1944–46); *Sir Hugo* (in 1945 renamed from 'Empire' ship of world War II); and such former LSTs as *Attacker* (1947–54), *Avenger* (1947–49) and *Charger* (1947–56). many of these former LSTs were modified and by 1956–57 were carrying the following craft:

*Ben Lomond*, *Ben Nevis*, *Messina* and *Narvik* — one LCT and 5 LCAs, but no permanent RM detachment in 1957. *Reggio* and *Striker* as LST(Assault), each with 8 LCAs, and carried 3rd Assault Squadron RM with the captain RM in *Striker*.

*Anzio*, *Battler*, *Bruiser*, *Charger*, *Chaser*, *Hunter*, *Puncher*, *Pursuer*, *Ravager*, *St Nazaire*, *Slinger*, *Stalker*, *Thruster*, *Tracker*, *Trouncer*, *Trumpeter*, *Tromso* and *Vaagso* — with 4 LCAs had no permanent RM detachment but some of these ships were later converted to LST(Assault) with RM Assault Squadron LCAs embarked.

By 1960 most of the World War II LSTs had been sold or scrapped, but the following continued in service, although at times in the Reserve Fleet, and RM Assault Squadrons served on several of them after they were converted to LST(A)s:

*Anzio* (1945–70+), *Ben Lomond* (1947–60), *Ben Nevis* (1945–70+), *Chaser* (1945–62), *Messina* (1945–70+), *Narvik* (1945–65), *Puncher* (1945–62), *Messina* (1945–65), *Narvik* (1945–65), *Ravager* (1944–61), *Reggio* (1944–60), *Stalker* (1944–70+), *Striker* (1944–70+) and *Tracker* (1945–70+).

### Destroyers and Frigates 1959–1980

From 1959 to 1980 detachments served in frigates and latterly in destroyers; in the early 1960s these detachments were of 20 to 22 but by the late 1970s they were as small as 10—man detachments commanded by a sergeant with a flotilla RM officer. the following classes of ship carried or might have carried RM detachments from time to time:

**Loch-class** (1,435 tons) of early 1940s — d 20 (but not until 1959) in *Loch Alvie* (1944–1960s), *Loch Fada* (1944–60s), *Loch Insh* (1944–64), *Loch Killisport* (1944–60s), and *Loch Ruthven* (1944–66).

**Leander-class** frigates (2,300 tons of 1958) — d 10 in late 1970s, see below.

The practice in 1980 was to maintain detachments in a given number of ships, moving detachments from one to another so that all ships in a class did not necessarily carry a detachment but might have done so on any commission. The last of the 22—man detachments was serving on *Phoebe* in January 1980, other detachments were in training, with 10—man detachments in *Eskimo*, *Kent*, *Ashanti*, *Bristol*, *Scylla*, *Antrim*, *Berwick*, *Gurkha*, *London* and *Rothersey*.

### Various ships 1981–1997

During the 1980s and 1990s 10—man detachments served in the following ships at different times. There were also detachments on the Falkland Islands patrol ships and other vessels. The ships included HMS *Rhyl*, *Herald*, *Battleaxe*, *Yarmouth*, *Danae*, *Brazen*, *Sentinel*, *Invincible* (aircraft carrier), *Brogan*, *Hecali*, *Ambuscade* (embarked a detachment from *Fearless* in 1991 for operations in Caribbean), RFA *Geraint* for operations in 1993. See also Commando Carriers and LPDs.

### Commando Carriers

*Bulwark* (23,300 standard tons) originally a carrier with fixed-wing aircraft of 1944 but completion deferred until 1954 for the Korean War, served two commissions before a major refit when she was converted to an amphibious assault ship on its completion in 1959. Later designated a Landing Platform Helicopter (LPH), she could carry a Commando Group to land them by helicopter or assault craft, and keep them supplied in the field. She also had an anti-submarine role for her helicopters. Affectionately known as the 'Rusty B', she was finally paid off in 1981(?).

*Albion* of similar class to *Bulwark* she was refitted as an LPH in 1961 and was the companion carrier to *Bulwark* throughout the next two decades, she finally paid off in 1973.

*Hermes* (28,700 full load) completed 1959, was converted to an LPH by March 1971, and had a further refit in 1977, but was principally deployed in an anti-submarine role. She was due to embark her first squadron of Harrier aircraft in 1980. She had a crew of 1,350 plus a Commando in an emergency, but in 1982 — see chapter 11 — she was required to carry Harriers to the South Atlantic, and only carried a company of commandos.

**Landing Platforms Dock** *Fearless* (11,060 tons standard) completed November 1965 and *Intrepid* (11,060 tons standard) completed March 1967 (12,120 tons loaded, 16,950 with dock flooded) were similar to American LPDs (see chapter 10), carrying in their dock four LCMs or larger vessels, and with four LCVPs on davits. There were flight deck facilities for five helicopters, see chapter 11. Continued in service in 1997.

**New construction** in 1997 was the Landing Platform Helicopter (LPH) HMS *Ocean* (21,500 tons) was to be launched by Her Majesty the Queen on 20 February 1998; and designed to land by helicopter or landing craft, Marines and their supporting artillery. Her AOC joined her in the summer of 1997 and elements of 9 Assault Sqn RM were forming at Poole. She has been designed to carry:

Four LCVP(5);

A Cdo Group (Light) of up to 803 men (500 as standard load and 303 at overload) with bunks for all the embarked troops;

A helicopter force with 180 personnel to fly and maintain: 12 Support Helicopters and six Light Helicopters; or six Attack Helicopters; or four Chinook helicopters.

39 BV 206D to be accommodated on the vehicle deck which will have a side ramp and a steep stern ramp for offloading to LCVPs in sheltered waters; and

The AOR is designed for Command Support Systems for the ship's staff and a Cdo HQ but *not* COMAW and Brigade command systems;

In July 1996 two replacement LPDs (as LPD(R)) — HMS *Bulwark* and *Albion* each of 15,100 tons displacement — were ordered with a view to their becoming operational from 2000 with *Albion* and 6 Assault Sqn being

commissioned first, when *Intrepid* was expected to pay off. *Bulwark* was expected to become fully operational (with 4 Assault Sqn) in April 2002. Meanwhile *Fearless* was expected to stay in commission. The LPD(R) will each carry an EMF of 245 personnel (648 on overload), with four Mk 10 RoRo LCUs and four LCVP(5)s. The flight deck will accommodate EH101 Support Helicopters. The operations room has been designed to include extensive command and control facilities (designated C41) to support COMAW and the Brigade staff.

The Landing Ships Logistic were planned to be replaced by ALSLs specifically designed for amphibious warfare with two to be operational by 2003.

#### Other vessels

**Royal Yachts**, *Victoria and Albert* (4,700 tons) embarked a band of 20 or more musicians from time to time (1899–1954). *Britannia* (3,990 tons) completed in 1954 and in service in 1995 but due for disposal, carried a band of 25 musicians from time to time.

*Caledonia*, ex-liner *Majestic* used as RN training ship (1937–39, damaged by fire).

*Fidelity* (2,450 tons BRT) converted for clandestine raids from French cargo boat, carried two aircraft and high speed power boats, but lost on second mission with all hands including 'T' Troop of 40 RM Commando about 31 December 1942.

*Glory IV* former Russian cruiser was captured in 1918 and used as the depot ship in Murmansk in 1919, providing facilities for men ashore from the battleship *Glory*.

*Martial* was name of Mobile Naval Base I in 1941–43.

*Mashobra* was supply ship of MNBDO from before 1938, sunk 1940.

*Menace* was name of Mobile Naval Base II in 1941.

*Meon* (1,375 tons) a converted *River*-class frigate she was the HQ ship of the Amphibious Squadron and carried an RM detachment in the 1950s and 1960s (1943–66).

*Protector* (2,900 tons) a net layer built in 1934, converted for Antarctic patrols in 1955, carried small RM detachments in the 1960s and was replaced by *Endurance* see below.

*Endurance* (3,600 fully loaded) completed as Antarctic patrol ship in 1968 from the *Anita Dan* purchased in 1967, originally built in 1956. Carried RM detachments from time to time and in service in 1982, see chapter 11. In late 1987, her 20th year of service in the RN, after a major refit sailed to the South Atlantic. Continued in commission in 1997.

*Victory*, first rate of 100 guns built 1759, and continues in dry dock at Portsmouth since 1922, from 1980s RMs attached as guides who are on the books of the barracks, HMS *Nelson*.

#### RN DEPOTS AND BASES

While a comprehensive list of these is beyond the scope of a Royal Marines' history, many Marines including transport drivers, ground defence forces and specialist trainees of World War II, have served in many of these establishments, although only the major establishments are listed below with examples of some smaller establishments:

*Actaeon* Torpedo School, Kent 1905–22; *Afrikander* Base, Simonstown, South Africa, pre-1919–75; *Antrim* Base, Belfast, Northern Ireland, WW II; *Appledore* RN Commandos, North Devon, 1946; *Ararat* see *Brontosaurus*; *Ariel* Training Centre, see also RNAS of World War II; *Astraea* Base, Lagos, Nigeria, WW II;

*Bacchante* Base, Aberdeen, Scotland, WW II; *Badger* Establishment at Harwich, Essex in WW II; *Bahadur* Base, India; *Baldur* at Reykjavik, Iceland, WW II; *Barbrook II* Boom Defence Depot, Freetown West Africa, WW II; *Basilisk* Base, Port Moresby, New Guinea, 1943–46; *Beaconsfield* British Pacific Fleet Base, WW II; *Beaver* Base, Humber, Yorkshire, WW II; *Beehive* Base, Felixstowe, Suffolk, WW II; *Bellerophon* Reserve Fleet, Portsmouth, 1950; *Benbow* Base, Trinidad, WW II; *Bonaventure* Base, South Africa, WW II; *Boscawen* Establishment at Portland, Dorset. where ships worked up, 1932–47; *Braganza* Base Chittagong, modern Bangladesh, WW II; *Bristol* Base, Gloucestershire, WW II; *Britannia* RN College, Dartmouth, Devon, 1940s to mid-1990s; *Brontosaurus* Amphibious Training Centre for Royal Armoured Corps, Castle Howard, Yorkshire 1942–46 (briefly *Ararat* before 1942); *Bruce* Training establishment Crail, Fife. WW II; *Brunswick* Base, St John, New Brunswick; *Bull* Base Nassau, Bahamas, 1942;

*Cabbala* Education & Vocational Training, Staffordshire, 1947; *Cabot* Base, Bristol, Avon, WW II; *Caledonia* Base Oban, Scotland formerly *St Andrew*, 1943 and continued until 1980+ as Engineer Training School, Rosyth, Scotland; *Calliope* Base, Tyne, Durham, WW II; *Cambridge* Gunnery Training School, Wembley, London, 1956; *Canada* Base, North America, WW II; *Cannae* Barracks, Phillipville, (modern Skikda), Algeria, WW II; *Canopus* Training Establishment, Alexandria, Egypt, 1940–45; *Carleton* Base, Ottawa, Canada, WW II; *Caroline* Base, Belfast, Northern Ireland, WW II; *Carrick* Base, Clyde, WW II; *Cartier* Base, Montreal, Canada, WW II; *Catariqui* Base, Kingston, Ontario, WW II; *Centurion* RN Pay & Records where Drafting & Record Office RM (DRORM) was based near Portsmouth until early 1993; and continues; *Ceres* Supply School, Weatherby, Yorkshire, 1947–?; *Chembaur* Camp, near Bombay, India, 1944–46; *Chippawa* Base, Winnipeg, Canada, WW II; *Chrysanthemum* Establishment, London 1940s; *Claverhouse* Base, Leith, Scotland, WW II; *Clio* Base, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria; *Cochrane* Depot ship and later Establishment, Rosyth, Scotland, 1937 and continued to mid-1990s; *Collingwood* Training Establishment, Fareham, Hampshire, 1940 and continued 1980 as RN Weapon & Electrical Engineering School; *Commonwealth* (Naval Party 2504) Base Kure, Japan, 1946–48; *Conestoga* Base, Galt, Ontario, WW II; *Conway* Training Establishment, Mersey, 1940s; *Copra* Co-Ops Pay & Record Office WW II; *Cormorant* Base, Gibraltar, 1889–1946, renamed *Rooke*; *Cornwallis* Base also RNAS training, Deep Brook, Canada, WW II; *Cressy* Base, Dundee, Scotland, WW II; *Cricket* Landing craft Base, Southampton, Hampshire, 1945–46 (RM command from 1945); *Curlew* Harbour Defence Depot, Inellan, 1943–46;

*Dalhousie* Establishment, Bombay, India, WW II and after; *Dartmouth* Landing Craft base, Dartmouth, Devon, WW II and see *Britannia*; *Dauntless*, WRNS Training Depot, Reading, Berkshire, 1947 and

continued training 1997; *Defiance* Establishment, Devonport, near Plymouth, WW II; *Defender* Base, Liverpool, Lancashire, WW II; *Defiance* Base Devonport, Plymouth, WW II; *Dilawar* Base, Karachi, modern Pakistan, WW II; *Diligence* Small Ships Base, Hythe, Isle of Wight, 1953; *Dinosaur* Base, Troon, Ayr, WW II; *Discovery* Base, Vancouver, British Columbia, WW II; *Dolphin* Submarine Base, Gosport, Hampshire, since about 1912 and continues; *Drake* Depot Devonport, near Plymouth, 1934 and continues as parent ship of Devonport; *Dryad* Navigation School, Southwick Fareham, near Portsmouth, 1919 and continues as School of Maritime Operations; *Dundonald I and II* Naval Wing of School of Signals, Inverary, Argyll, but at Auchengate 1942–46; *Duke* Establishment, Great Malvern, Worcestershire, WW II.

*Effingham* Co–Ops Training Base, Dartmouth, Devon, 1943–46; *Eland* Base, West Africa, WW II; *Europa* Base, Lowestoft, Suffolk, WW II; *Excellent* RN Gunnery School, Portsmouth, 1891–1980s, HQRN established here in 1996; *Exmouth* accommodation ship, Scapa, northern Scotland, 1942–45;

*Ferret* Base, Londonderry, Northern Ireland, WW II; *Fervent* Base, Ramsagte, Kent; *Fisgard* Training Establishment, Portsmouth, 1910–32, later an establishment at Torpoint, near Plymouth, 1946 and continued in 1980; *Flinders* Depot, Australia, WW II; *Flora* Base Invergordon, Scotland, 1939; *Forte* Base, Falmouth, Cornwall, WW II; *Fortitude* Base, Ardrrossan, Scotland, WW II; *Fortune* Base, Newhaven, Sussex, WW II; *Forward* Base, Newhaven, Sussex WW II; *Fox* Base, Lerwick, Shetland Islands, WW II; *Fullarton* Landing Craft Base, WW II;

*Ganges* Boys Training establishment, near Harwich, Essex, c1906–75; *Glendour* Establishment, Pwllheli, North Wales, WW II; *Golden Hind* Base, Sydney, New South Wales, WW II; *Gordon* Base, Gravesend, Kent, WW II; *Gould* Barracks, Ceylon, 1946; *Grasshopper* Coastal Forces, Weymouth, Dorset, 1943–44; *Griffin* Base Port Arthur, Ontario;

*Hamilcar* Landing Craft Base, Algiers, WW II; *Hasdrubal* Base, Algiers, 1943–46; *Harrier* Aircraft Direction Centre, Pembroke (modern Dyfed), Wales, 1948; *Hawk* Upper Yardman (see *Temeraire*), Exbury, near Southampton, 1946–50s; *Helder* Co–Ops Training Establishment, Brightlingsea, Essex, 1942–46; *Helicon* Base, Aultbea, Australia, 1941–45; *High flyer* Base, Trincomalee, Ceylon, 1943–59+; *Hornet* Coastal Forces Base 1925–34, and at Gosport, Hampshire 1939–57;

*Imperieuse* Training Establishment, Devonport pre–1919–?; *Impregnable* Training Establishment, Devonport, 1920–? and at St Budeaux, near Plymouth, 1943–48;

*Jufair* HQ Persian Gulf, at Aden and later Bahrain, after 1946 to 1960s; *Jupiter* Reserve Fleet, Gareloch, which leads to the Clyde estuary, 1950s;

*King Alfred* RN Officer Training Establishment, Hove, Sussex, and in last year at Exbury, near Southampton, 1939–46;

*Landswell* Landing craft base, Singapore, c1945–46; *Leonidas* Base, Takoradi, Ghana, West Africa, 1941–45; *Lizard* Landing Craft Base, Cornwall, 1942–45; *Lochinvar* Base, Port Edgar and later Minesweeper Trials Establishment, 1940–57+; *Lucifer* Base, Swansea, South Wales, WW II; *Lynx* Base, Dover, Kent, 1939–46;

*Malabar* nominal depot, Bermuda, 1919 and continued 1980; *Marlborough* Torpedo School, Eastbourne, Sussex, 1942–47; *Medway II* Base, Beirut, Lebanon, and later at Malta, 1942–46; *Melampus* Base, Bathurst, Canada, WW II; *Melville*, Darwin, Australia, WW II; *Mentor* Base, Stornoway, Scotland, WW II; *Mercury* Signals School, Leydene, 1941 and continued in 1980 at Petersfield, Hampshire; *Mercury II* Signals School at Portsmouth WW II; *Mersey* Depot, Liverpool, Lancashire, 1940–46; *Midge* Coastal Forces Base, Gt Yarmouth, Norfolk, WW II; *Minos* Base, Lowestoft, Suffolk, WW II; *Miranda* Base, Gt Yarmouth, Norfolk, WW II; *Monck* Carrier Training and *Monck II* Landing Craft Base, Port Glasgow, 1942–46; *Montcalm* Base, Quebec, Canada, WW II; *Montserrat* Base, Londonderry, Northern Ireland; *Moreta* Establishment, Palestine, WW II; *Mosquito* Coastal Forces Base, WW II; *Mount Edgcomb* Barracks, Devonport, 1945; *Mount Stewart* RN Commandos, Devon, 1945–46, became *Appledore*;

*Naden* Base, Esquimaux, WW II; *Nelson* RN Barracks, Portsmouth since 1 August 1973 and continues, see also chapter 11; *Neptune* Base, Faslane, on Clyde, 1974 with Marine detachment 1975–80; *Nile* Base, Alexandria, Egypt, dates not traced; *Nimrod* Establishment, Castletown, Isle of Man, 1940–46; *Niobe* Establishment, Glasgow, WW II; *Nonsuch* Base, Edmonton, Alberta, WW II; *Northney I, II, III and IV*, Landing Craft Training, Hayling Island, Hampshire, WW II; *Osborne* Parent Establishment, Cowes, Isle of Wight, 1941, renamed *Vectis*; *Orion* Reserve Fleet, Devonport, 1950; *Orlando* Base, Greenock, Scotland, 1940–46; *Osiris* Base, Canal Zone, Egypt, 1949–54; *Osprey* Base, Portland (see also RNAS) 1928 and continued in 1980, but in 1941–46 was at Dunoon, Scotland;

*Pembroke* Base and HQ Chatham, Kent, 1891 and continued 1980; *Penguin* Base, Sydney, Australia, WW II; *Philomel* Base, Auckland, New Zealand, WW II; *Phoenicia* C–in–C Mediterranean Staff WW II to 1950s; *Phoenix* RN Defence School, Stamshaw, 1949–57; *Pomone* Boom Defence Depot, Scapa, 1943–46; *Porcupine* Landing craft Base, Stokes Bay, near Portsmouth, 1944–46; *Prosperine* Base, Lyness, WW II; *Powerful* Training Establishment, Devonport, from before 1919 but in 1920 renamed *Impregnable* — see above; *President* RN Staff, London, formerly RNR Drill Ship, 1862 and continued in 1980; *Prometheus* Depot for local defence vessel in the Mediterranean, 1942–44; *Pursuivant* Base, Falkland Islands from 1946; *Ryramus* Base, Kirkwall, Orkney Islands, WW II;

*Quebec* Co-Ops and LC Base, Inveraray, Argyle, 1940–46; *Queen* Base, Regina, Saskatchewan, WW II; *Queen Charlotte* AA ranges, Ainsdale, Lancashire, WW II;

*Racer* Base, Larne, Northern Ireland, WW II; *Raleigh* Training Establishment, Torpoint, near Plymouth, 1939–45 and continued as new entrants training establishment in 1997; *Resolution* Base, Christmas Island in Pacific, 1958; *Robertson* Camp and LC Base, Sandwich, Kent, c1941–46; *Rooke* Boom Defence, Rosyth, Scotland, 1940–45 (see *Safeguard*) and Base Gibraltar, 1946 and continued 1980; *Rosneath* Base, Scotland, WW II; *Royal Anne* Depot Ship, Arromanches, Normandy, 1944–45; *Royal Arthur* Training Establishment, Skegness, Lincolnshire, WW II, later School for Petty Officers at Corsham, near Bath; *Royal William* Dockyard Establishment, Plymouth, in 1980 closed early 1990s (see also WW II Naval Parties;

*Safeguard* Boom Depot, Southampton, WW II and at Rosyth, 1946–50s; *Saker* RN Staff, Washington, District of Columbia, USA, 1950s; *St Andrew* Base, Oban, Scotland, renamed *Caledonia*, 1941–43; *St Angelo* Base, Malta, formerly *Egmont*, 1933 and continued 1980; *St Christopher* Coastal Forces Base, Fort William, Scotland, WW II; *St George I* and *II* Training Bases in Isle of Man, 1940–45, at Gosport, Hampshire, 1946–48 and later RN SD–Officer School, Portsmouth in 1970s; *St Matthew* Landing Craft Training Base, Essex; *St Vincent* Training Establishment (formerly Forton Barracks) Fareham, Hampshire, 1927–60s; *Sandfly* Coastal Forces Base, Peterhead, Scotland, WW II; *Salsette* Co-Ops Base, India, 1943–45; *Sandragon* Base, Seychelles, 1946–?; *Saunders* LC Training Camp, Kabrit, Egypt, WW II; *Scipio* Base, Oban, 1943; *Sea Eagle* Training establishment and Base, Londonderry, Northern Ireland, 1947–60s; *Sea Serpent* Landing Craft Base, Bracklesham Bay, near Chichester, WW II; *Sheba* Base, Aden, 1944–67; *Skirmisher* Base, Milford Haven, Dyfed, WW II; *Spartiate* Base, Glasgow, 1939–46; *Sphinx* Base, Egypt, 1941–46; *Squid* Base WW II; *Stagona* Base, Halifax, Nova Scotia, WW II; *Stag* Depot, Suez Canal, 1940–49; *Standard* Naval Camp, Hexam, Northumberland, 1941–45; *Star* Base, Hamilton, Ontario, WW II; *Sultan* Depot, Singapore, 1940 and 1945–46, later Training establishment, Gosport, Hampshire, 1956 and continued 1980;

*Talbot* Base, Sardinia, WW II; *Tamar* Depot Ship, Hong Kong, 1937–41, sunk, HQ and base Hong Kong 1945 and continued 1980; *Tecumseh* Base, Calgary, Alberta, WW II; *Temeraire* Upper Yardsman College for other ranks officer candidates (attended by some Royal Marines), Port Edgar, 1955–60s, continued 1980 as RN Physical Training School at Portsmouth; *Terror* Base, Singapore, WW II to 1971; *Thunderer* RN College, Keyham, near Leicester, 1946, later as RN Engineering College, Manadon, (Devon) until closed in mid-1990s; *Caledonia*, until closed in late 1980s; *Toreador* Base for ferry services, 1944; *Tormentor* LC and Raiding Base, Hamble river, Southampton Water, 1940–46; *Tower* Auxiliary Patrol Depot, London, 1940–46; *Turtle* Co-Ops Base, Poole, Dorset, 1942–46;

*Unicorn* Base, Saskatoon, Canada, WW II;

*Valkyrie* Radar School, Isle of Man, 1941–46; *Vectis* Base, Isle of Wight (formerly *Osborne*), 1942–45; *Vernon* Torpedo School, Portsmouth, 1876 and continued 1997 as seamanship, diving, etc. school, RMHQ based here temporarily 1993–96; *Vivid* Devonport Barracks, from before 1919 to 1934, renamed *Drake*; *Volcano* Bomb Disposal School, Holmrock, WW II;

*Wasp* Coastal Forces Base, Dover, Kent, WW II; *Warren* Base, Greenock, Inverclyde, WW II; *Warrior* HQ C-in-C Fleet, Norwood, London area, continues; *Watchful* Base, Gt Yarmouth, Norfolk, WW II; *Wellesley* Training Establishment, Liverpool, Lancashire, 1940–46; *Westcliffe* Landing craft Base, Essex, c1942–46; *Wildfire* Gunnery Ranges and gun testing, Sheerness, Kent, before 1919 to 1924 and 1937–50; *Woolverstone* Landing Craft Base, Suffolk, c1943–46.

*York* Base, Toronto, Canada, WW II.

## ROYAL NAVAL AIR STATIONS AND RN AIR SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS

### Main Air Stations

Royal Marine personnel from the Royal Naval Air Service Defence Force (RNASDF), as of 28 June 1943 when a Depot was formed at Towyn, North Wales, under command of Commander RM Training Group Wales (AGRM Circ 25 June 1943). In August they came under the direct control of AGRM, as advisor to the Admiralty (AGRM RM Circ 2126/43 10 Aug 1943). The Depot was closed in October/November (RM Circ 8969 2 Nov 1943) and its personnel transferred to RMTG(Wales). The air defence units with the RNAS became known as RM AA Companies RN Air Stations from about August 1943. Other Marines served as drivers in many stations, as ground defence forces in those likely to be attacked, and as security forces in others. From 16 August 1943 Marines in the AA Companies were administered by RM Headquarters as shown below by stars — Chatham\*, Portsmouth and Plymouth — (RM Circ 314/10/43A 23 Aug 1943):

*Condor* Arbroath, Angus, 1940–60s, later 45 Cdo RM base; *Cormorant II* Gibraltar, 1940–46+; *Daedalus* Hull 1915–20, Lee-on-Solent, Hampshire, 1939 and continues; *Kai Tak*, Hong Kong, 1926–41 and 1945–60s; *Fulmar* Lossiemouth, Scotland, 1940–75(?); *Gadwall* Sydenham, Belfast, 1941–65(?), see also *Caroline* below; *Goldcrest I* (see below for *II*), Dale and Brawdy, both Dyfed, 1940–65(?); *Heron* Yeovilton, Somerset, 1940 and continued 1997; *Jackdaw\*\** (see Home Air Station); *Kestrel* Worthy Down, Worcestershire, 1919–50s; *Merlin\** Donibristle, Fife, 1940–1960s (RM AA detachment to *Peewit* Sept 1943); *Osprey* Portland, Dorset, (seaplane base in World War I), WW II and continues; *Owl\*\*\** (see Home Air stations); *Phoenix* Fayid, Egypt, 1940 and returned to RAF about 1946; *Peregrine* Ford, Sussex, 1939–46; *Raven* Eastleigh, Hampshire, 1937–47(?); *Seahawk* Culdrose, Cornwall, from about 1940 and closed in the mid–1990s; *Simbang* Sembawang, Malaya, 1945–50s; *Vulture* (see Home Air Stations)

### Home Air Stations (UK) of World War II

During World War II the Corps provided ground defences (RNAS Defence Forces) and some AA defences from time to time for some of the following stations, a number of which had RM transport drivers in small detachments commanded by sergeants:

*Blackcap*, Stretton, Lancashire; *Buzzard* Lympe, Kent, from 1944; *Caroline* satellite station, see *Gadwall* in Main Stations; *Condor II* Dundee, Scotland; *Corncrake* Ballyhalbert and Kirkston, Northern Ireland; *Daedalus II* Sandbanks and Lawrenny Ferry, Pembroke (modern Dyfed); *Dipper* Henstridge, Somerset; *Drake II* Ruborough; *Fieldfare* Evanton, Scotland; *Flycatcher* Middle Wallop, Cheshire, and later Ludham, Norfolk; *Fulmar II* Milltown, Moray; *Gamecock* Bramcote, Warwickshire; *Gannet* Eglington, West Midlands(?); *Godwit* Hinstock, Staffordshire; *Godwit II* Weston Park; *Goldcrest II* Angle, Dyfed; *Heron II* Charlton Horethorne, Somerset, and Haldon, Devon(?); *Hornbill I* Culham, Oxfordshire; *Hornbill II* Beccles., Suffolk; *Humming Bird* Zeal, Somerset(?); *Jackdaw I\*\**, Crail, Fife; *Jackdaw II* Dunino, Scotland; *Landrail I* Machrihanish and Strabane, Northern Ireland; *Mentor II* Stornaway, Outer Hebrides; *Merganser* Crimond, Scotland; *Nighthawk* Drem, Scotland; *Nightjar* Inskip, Lancashire; *Nightjar II* Macmerry, Scotland; *Nuthatch* Anthon, Scotland; *Owl\*\*\** Fearn; *Peewit* ( from September 1943) near Carnoustie, Scotland; *Pintail* Nuts Corner, Antrim; *Ringtail I* Burscough, Lancashire; *Ringtail II* Woodvale; *Robin* Grimsetter; *Sanderling* Abbotsinch; *Shrike* Maydown, Londonderry; *Siskin* Gosport, Hampshire; *Sparrowhawk* Hatston, and from 1944 at Halesworth, Sussex; *Tern* Twatt, Orkney; *Urley* Ronaldsway, Isle of Man; *Vulture I* Cornwall(?) and *Vulture II* Thrall, Cornwall and Bushbarn, Hampshire; *Wagtail* Ayr, Scotland.

### Home Establishments (UK) of World War II

During World War II the Corps provided defences and security from time to time for many of the following stations, most of which had RM transport drivers in small detachments commanded by sergeants:

*Ariel* Warrington, Lancashire; *Daedalus* Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire; *Daedalus III* Bedhampton, near Havant, Hampshire; *Eaglet* Liverpool, Lancashire; *Fledgling* Eccleshall and Millmece, Staffordshire; *Gosling* Warrington, Lancashire; *Harrier* Kete, Dyfed; *Macaw* Bootle, Cumberland; *Medina* Puckpool, Isle of Wight; *St Vincent* Gosport, Hampshire; *Seaborn* Dartmouth, Devon; *Shearwater* Yarmouth, Isle of Wight; *Turnstone* Fulham and Watford, London area;

### Overseas RNAS Establishments and Air Stations of World War II

During World War II the Corps provided defences from time to time for those establishments in hostile areas, and security for others of the following stations:

In Argentina (offices?) *Avlon*;  
In West Indies including *Buzzard* 1940–44; *Goshawk* Trinidad; and *Malabar II* Bermuda.  
In Mediterranean including *Grèbe* Dekheila; *Falcon* Hal Far, Malta; *Goldfinch* Ta Quali, Malta.  
On the Indian sub-continent including *Bambara* China Bay, Trincomalee, Ceylon; *Bheruda* (Race Course) Colombo, Ceylon; *Garuda* Coimbatore; *Kalugu* Establishment, Cochin; *Monara* Establishment, Marhagama, Ceylon; *Rajalaya* Puttalam, Ceylon; *Scruna* Establishment, Ratmalana, Ceylon; *Ukussa* Katukurunda, Ceylon; *Valluru* Tambara, Madras; *Vairi* Sollur; *Valru* Establishment, Sollur.  
In Malaya including *Rajala* Penang.  
In East Africa and Indian Ocean establishments including *Ironclad II* Andrakaka; *Kaiton II* and *Maragas* Addu Atoll; *Kipanga I, II* and *III* Port Reid and Voi; *Korongo* Nairobi.  
In Australia establishment at HMAS *Albatross* Nowra.  
In South Africa establ'ts including *Malagas*, Wingfield; and *Samur I* and *II*.  
In the Gold Coast (modern Ghana) establishment *Wara*, Komenda.  
In Sierra Leone *Spurwing* Establishment, Hastings.

## MOBILE NAVAL BASE DEFENCE ORGANISATIONS

### 'X' Organisation, later MNBDO Nucleus

Formed in the autumn of 1923<sup>1</sup> at Fort Cumberland, Eastney in Hampshire, the Organisation experimented with methods of landing guns etc. over scaffolding piers 'mainly by extemporisation, brute force and guts'<sup>2</sup> (see Chapter 2). After a major exercise in 1935 on the Isle of Arran (Scotland), the Nucleus arrived in Alexandria on 23 September, worked on defences in Egypt<sup>3</sup> and Palestine, returning to the UK in July 1936. The authorised strength was then increased but men were drafted from the unit in 1938 to bring fleet detachments up to war-strength. This was later stopped and the Nucleus organised into eight AA batteries to defend Portsmouth. In August 1939 a battery of eight 3.7-in guns was formed and sent to Alexandria, with some men from the Nucleus and 100 from the Fleet, who were replaced by reservists.

That summer the unit strength was 264 all ranks,<sup>4</sup> 175 of these manning the AA guns in Alexandria. Men from the Nucleus were also drafted to the Fortress Unit (FU I) that summer. Fourteen of the unit's 20 AA and coastal guns were sent to the army. Skeleton units were left at Fort Cumberland in September 1939, for an air defence brigade HQ, a signals company, fire control for 6-in gun batteries and a Landing, Transport and Workshop (LTW) Company. The unit had a few tractors, six searchlights, training facilities<sup>5</sup> for coastal defence artillery, including indirect fire control gear. It also had quantities of scaffolding and other materials for landing guns over beaches. The experience gained in the 16 years to 1939 gave this Organisation probably the most advanced techniques for the beach landing of heavy equipment of any service in the world. It was situated alongside the ISTDG at Fort Cumberland, so that there was certainly unofficial liaison between these units.

Those remaining at Fort Cumberland joined MNBDO I on its formation. The war establishment of officers and 568 other ranks had been agreed by 17 May 1939, but the unit was not brought up to strength until 1940 as MNBDO I.

### 'MNBDO Group'

This term was applied to the RM component of a Mobile Naval Base. The Base was commanded by an RN captain and also had RN units for booms and mines (the Under-Water Group) and a Sea Patrols Group. The commanders of MNBDO Groups when under RM command reported to the Adjutant General, and the full title of their commands were Royal Marine Group MNBDO I or MNBDO II.

### MNBDO I

Formation was approved as of 12 September 1939,<sup>6</sup> with an establishment of 78 officers and 2,150 other ranks, but the equipment available was only a fraction of that authorised (e.g. six searchlights out of 48, 17 vehicles out of 75). Arrangements were made to train tradesmen, AA gun crews, searchlight crews, and gunnery and wireless instructors, at army establishments.<sup>7</sup> The establishment was reviewed by a small HQ set up on 29 January 1940, when a provisional strength of 202 officers and 4,089 other ranks was proposed. During February HQs were also set up for the Air Defence Group, the Land Defence Force and the Coast Defence Group. Brig Weston took command on 1 March and four days later the HQ Wing was formed with a Provost Company, Survey Section, HQ Defence Platoon and some other administrative Sections. The Landing and Maintenance Group was formed in May 1940,<sup>8</sup> absorbing officers and men with experience of building piers, and handling stores and vehicles over open beaches, etc. Other subunits were formed from time to time, as shown in the unit history summaries for beach units, artillery regiments and battalions.

The majority of men in the Organisation were 'HOs', as were eventually nearly all the junior officers. The first 2,010 recruits<sup>9</sup> joining the organisation in mid-February 1940 went from depots and their homes to: 1st RM AA Rgt at Arborfield, Carlisle and Blandford; 11th RM Searchlight Regiment at Taunton and Yeovil; the Land Defence Force (later 11th RM Bn) at Browdown; and the Coast Artillery Brigade with its HQ at Fort Cumberland and Hayling Island camp.

The MNBDO HQ in 1940 provided a training party<sup>10</sup> in June — about the time of the retreat from Dunkirk — to advise army coastal batteries on techniques and equipment. Many subunits were detached; and, under army command, were employed in AA and other Home Defence deployments (see subunits' history summaries). During the invasion scare the HQ stood to for 72 hours from 7 to 9 September. On 21 November the AA units with the army were put at seven days' notice to revert to RM command. Exercises and training continued; then from the strength of 4,501 on 1 December 1940,<sup>11</sup> 500 experienced men were provided for MNBDO II and replaced by recruits.

The HQ at Fort Cumberland was closed on 4 February 1941,<sup>12</sup> and the Organisation sailed for the Middle East. After a five-day visit to Durban (South Africa), the men reached Tahal Camp in Egypt on 23 April and came under command of the C-in-C Middle East.<sup>13</sup> Three ships carrying heavy gear reached Haifa (Palestine) the next day, and the equipment, guns, etc. were reloaded tactically during the next few weeks by men from the MNBDO. Meanwhile General Weston took elements of the Organisation to Crete, where they landed on 9 May and were in action as infantry during the German airborne landings and subsequent fighting (see chapter 3). There were nearly 1,200 casualties,<sup>14</sup> mostly prisoners, from the MNBDO units.

During the rest of 1941 the units were brought up to strength and reorganised. General Weston hoped to use the Organisation in the Far East and resisted attempts to have subunits detached,<sup>15</sup> but in February 1942 1st RM (Heavy) AA Regiment went to Ceylon. 1st Coast Regiment with the Landing and Maintenance details, fortified island bases in the Indian Ocean. Various subunits had been in action while MNBDO I was in the Mediterranean, but the majority of time was spent in anti-aircraft defences and in training. All the searchlight units in the Canal Zone came under the command of the RM searchlight group for a time.

The stores depot from Fort Cumberland moved to Geneifa (north of Port Tewfik) in 1941, and its staff, along with other elements then in Egypt, followed the AA Regiment to the Far East in 1943. Major General W. B. F. Lukis<sup>16</sup> took over from general Weston in April 1943; and the HQ of MNBDO I closed in the middle east on 16 June 1943 and reopened in Colombo (Ceylon, modern Sri Lanka) on 27 June. This HQ commanded two Mobile Naval Base Brigades organised for the defence of Ceylon and training for operations in Burma. The two AA regiments — 1st RM Rgt in India, 2nd RM Rgt in Ceylon — were also administered by the HQ of MNBDO I in Ceylon, until they returned to the UK, along with the personnel of the two Brigades, during the spring of 1944.<sup>17</sup> The personnel were remustered that summer for landing craft, commando and other duties, the HQ finally being disbanded in September 1944,<sup>12</sup> when the principal AA units formed 5 RM AA Brigade.

## **MNBDO II**

Formed about 1 January 1941 under command of Brig H. R. Lambert (later Major General, CBE, DSC) with 500<sup>18</sup> men from MNBDO I, including 130 from Fortress Unit I. Many junior officers were transferred from Army OCTUs<sup>19</sup> and the men were 'HOs'. The Organisation was based on Hayling Island (near Portsmouth), and in April bomb damage<sup>20</sup> caused the HQ to be moved at least once. During the summer many of the men of the subunits were trained in various army establishments (cp: MNBDO I) including the School of Cookery at Aldershot. The HQ had moved to Bentworth (Hampshire) area in May, and for a short while had an RAF radar and balloon barrage squadron under command. Units were deployed in the air and coast defences of the UK during 1942–3 before being concentrated in the Nottingham area early in 1943, ready for embarkation for the Middle East, where they arrived in June 1943 just before<sup>21</sup> the HQ of MNBDO I left for the Far East. Subunits of MNBDO II were deployed in AA defences of north–east Malta in April and from 16 June to 9 July<sup>22</sup> before the Organisation was sent to Sicily under command of the Eighth Army. The establishment of some subunits by this date had been brought in line with army war establishments for personnel and weapons.

After service on detached duties with the Eighth Army, the units of MNBDO II were assembled in Augusta (Sicily) for embarkation and arrived in the UK in February 1944.<sup>23</sup> the HQ was disbanded in May 1944<sup>23</sup> and personnel of all but those AA Regiments forming 5 RM AA Bde were sent to North Wales for selection as landing craft crews, commandos or for other duties.

## **Fortress Unit I**

Formed about August 1939<sup>1</sup> under Lt–Col H. R. Lambert, DSC, as The Fortress Unit from men of the MNBDO Nucleus, it had an HQ and five companies:<sup>2</sup> Landing Coy, Ship Unloading Coy, Gun–Mounting Coy, Boat Coy, and a Transport and Workshop Coy. Men of the Unit modified SS *Mashobra*<sup>3</sup> in Liverpool during that summer, with accommodation and provided deck stowage for two MLCs, one had to be left behind when a derrick jib buckled on hoisting it aboard. The MLC sailed independently for Scapa.

Meanwhile Col C. T. Brown had been asked to advise<sup>4</sup> on the preparation of Scapa Flow's defences (see chapter 2), and the Unit, with a Survey Section and a Signals Section, about 450 all ranks, sailed for Scapa in SS *Theseus* on 14 July 1939.<sup>3</sup> Despite incessant gales and mud, the Marines installed their first gun in seven days (mostly with hand tackle and tools), and in 12 Days they had disembarked all the gear, including guns, searchlights and generators. Some searchlights had to be hoisted up a cliff face, ammunition shelters had to be built and proof rounds fired from each gun, before the Unit left on 3 September to return to Portsmouth. The job had been completed in under six weeks, when the army reportedly said it would take six years.<sup>6</sup>

In October *Mashobra* was in Portsmouth,<sup>7</sup> her fitting out incomplete and her structure based on Transport Regulations which were not suited to MNBDO–type operations. She sailed to the Clyde and during that winter her AA guns were in action, the ship also weathered several gales in practice landings. The Unit also unloaded stores from a number of ships in April, and on 3 and 4 May 1940 the men worked nonstop loading *Mashobra*, which had been commissioned as an HM Ship for the coming voyage to Norway. The Unit became independent of MNBDO I at this time but was still administered from Fort Cumberland,<sup>9</sup> and was regarded as a Landing and Maintenance Group.

*Mashobra* carried army vehicles as well as MNBDO–type stores, the MLC No. 18, two picket boats and a speedboat being stowed on deck.<sup>8</sup> Warm clothing was issued during the voyage in rough weather to Skånland (near Narvik) where she moored on 11 May. Throughout her stay in Norway all parties worked on unloading ammunition, petrol and other stores from ships that could use Harstad.<sup>10</sup> The MLC was sent to land troops on several occasions (see p. 60). On 23 May *Mashobra* was bombed<sup>11</sup> and had to be beached, the men living ashore for three days in tents while salvaging what they could from her before sailing for the UK. 'All beards were shaved off',<sup>12</sup> before landing on 5 June 1940.

Re–equipped the Unit sailed for Iceland a month later, landing at Reykjavik on 12 July.<sup>13</sup> The Marines had to scrounge tents for their camp ashore. They prepared gun sites, and during September erected huts for the army when waiting for more guns to arrive. The 2101 all ranks of the Unit were employed in off–loading guns and stores, surveying sites and preparing them — in one case blasting mica–granite — before installing some 18<sup>14</sup> 3–in and 6–in guns. Often these had to be hauled by tractors making little more than 3 mph for long distances, and in one fortnight elements of the Unit travelled 800 miles<sup>15</sup> to prepare sites. They returned to the UK at the end of October and were absorbed into MNBDO II on disbanding early in January 1941.<sup>16</sup>

## **Fortress Unit II**

This Unit was being formed in May 1940 but no records of its composition have been traced. It became the Landing and Maintenance Group of MNBDO II.

## **Special Gun–mounting Party, RM**

On 27 August 1939 orders were received to mount several coast guns, a party of four officers and 50 other ranks (including four seamen) — drawn from Fortress Unit I and with NCO volunteers<sup>18</sup> taking the place of Marines, as few men were available — began dismantling one battery (three guns) at Fort Cumberland and collecting scaffolding etc. Three more guns, packed for shipment, were collected from Coventry (West Midlands), and the installation work began within three days of the orders being received.

At Blyth (Northumberland) the first pair of 6–in guns were installed after considerable excavations in sand dunes. These guns were fired on 4 September. The next pair of '6–in' were installed without difficulty at Sunderland (County Durham), along with two coast–defence searchlights and three generators, by 7 September. At Yarmouth (Norfolk) concrete holdfasts had to be built and the guns were installed, despite difficulties, by 17 September. The experience of this Party pointed the need for gun and mounting components to be un–boxed and checked by Fort Cumberland staff, for at Yarmouth considerable work had to be done by armourers on guns collected through naval stores. The Director of Armament Supplies took up this point, but the difficulties in assembling and specially packing equipment for MNBDO operations continued throughout 1940.<sup>19</sup> The guns were manned by army crews before the Party returned to Fort Cumberland that September 1939.

## **3 Mobile Naval Base Brigade**

Formed on 24 July 1943, at the time Japanese amphibious and other raids were expected on naval bases in Ceylon during the summer of 1943. The Commander Brig J. H. G. Wills, OBE, had under command: 1st RM Coast Rgt, from August 1943 to December 1944;<sup>21</sup> and from formation 24th RM Bn, 3rd RM Coast Rgt, 'S' Searchlight Bty, 2nd RM AA Rgt (operationally commanded by 24 (Army) AA Bde), the HQ Defence Platoon, etc. From mid–August 1943 to January 1844 the Brigade was based at Katukurunda,<sup>22</sup> south of Colombo, in a ground defence role. Its higher formation was GHQ Ceylon, until early in 1944 it reverted to Admiralty control, when it was briefly commanded by Brig H. T. Tollemache (who also commanded the Small Operations Group in Ceylon). 3 MN Brigade returned to UK, arriving on 16 March 1944 and was officially disbanded on 17 May 1944 (RMRO 719/44). The HQ had closed on 14 May, when 3 officers and a 100 men went to commando training and other remustered for LC crews etc from a total strength that April had been 927 all ranks.<sup>23</sup>

#### **'MB Group' with XXXIII Indian Corps**

The 1 RM AA Brigade HQ, 1st RM (Heavy) AA Rgt and a Landing and Maintenance Unit, were sent to India from Ceylon in April 1943, commander Brig V. D. Thomas, to train for amphibious operations in the Arakan. The 'Group' was under the command of XXXIII Indian Corps. The proposed operations were deferred and the 'Group' disbanded about January 1944.

## **LAND ARTILLERY UNITS**

#### **Artillery of World War I**

The RMA from formations which had fought in the 1914–18 War were disbanded in 1919<sup>1</sup> and included: RMA AA Brigade, disbanded about February; RMA Howitzer Brigade, disbanded 15 June; RMA gunners from 525 to 528 RGA Siege Btys, disbanded May; and RMA Heavy Siege train, disbanded in March.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Artillery Headquarters of RM Division**

During the formation of the RM Division in September 1940<sup>3</sup> a six-gun battery of 3.7-in howitzers was to form the division's artillery. The first of these had been formed in April 1940 (see RM Circ 2119/40S dated 18 April 1940) and others were to be provided by transfers from the howitzer batteries at that time with the MNBDO. The Army Council drafted — if it was not signed officially — a letter of 8 January 1941 to the Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty, which included the following: 'The principle that the [RM] Division should contain ... anti-tank and light anti-aircraft guns, is accepted ... [and these] should eventually be manned by Royal Marines ... There is little prospect, however, of these weapons being available ... for some considerable time. If the division is required for action before these units are available the Army accept the responsibility for provision to the scale laid down ...'<sup>4</sup> When a ceiling was placed on army manpower, however, 'the War Office found it necessary to cancel the agreement',<sup>5</sup> and the Adjutant general agreed that the RM division should raise its own supporting units.<sup>6</sup>

The HQ of RM Division Artillery was opened in the autumn of 1942 at Lymptone Grange, near Exton Camp in Devon. The commander was Col S. G. B. Paine, an appointment equivalent to CRA in an army division. Arrangements were made to attach various RM artillery cadres to army units for training.<sup>7</sup> By mid–October 1942 the establishment was:<sup>8</sup> Division Artillery HQ with 'H' Section of No. 2 Company of

Division Signals; a field regiment, a light anti-aircraft regiment and an anti-tank regiment. In December this HQ moved to Brockenhurst, Hampshire, and a number of exercises were carried out. On 27 April 1943 the Royal Artillery Col D. C. W. Sanders, OBE, AFC, TD, assumed command of the RM Division Artillery and was promoted Brigadier on 2 July.

When the Division was disbanded, the Brigadier and many of the division's gunnery

Officers were transferred to the Armoured Support Group and major support craft. The last War Diary entry for this HQ dated 4 July 1943 states that 12 rounds HE and some smoke were the maximum available per Section for practice shoots.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Brigade Artillery Headquarters**

In August 1942 part of the Artillery HQ RM Division became a separate Brigade Artillery HQ, and by 27 August were at Dalditch, Devon, where artillery units were being formed. It seems likely that this Brigade artillery HQ, commanded by Lt-Col J. M. Fuller, took over training responsibilities from the RM Division Artillery HQ, for the Brigade artillery HQ moved to Penally Camp in Pembrokeshire, in the last days of August. During practice shoots on army ranges near Penally the movement of guns and vehicles became impossible in part of the camp, owing to heavy rains and lack of hardstanding gun parks. This HQ was disbanded by August 1943 and the personnel posted to the Armoured Support Group.

#### **Air Defence Brigade of MNBDO I, later 1 RM Anti-Aircraft Brigade and Headquarters AA Ceylon.**

The nucleus of an Air Defence Group was formed by MNBDO on 29 January 1940, with a staff which included Fire Control Instructors.<sup>10</sup> But a Brigade HQ was not formed until January 1941, with 1st and 2nd RM Anti-Aircraft Regiments and 11th Searchlight Regiment under command. An Advance HQ went to Crete in May 1941 (see chapter 3). The main HQ remained in Egypt, but as the MNBDO AA units moved to Ceylon in the winter of 1941–2, a new HQ was formed by redesignating 1st RM AA Regiment's HQ as 1 RM AA Brigade HQ. Although no War Diary entries were made for the Cairo HQ after DECEMBER 1941, it possibly supervised the re-formation of 'A' Battery, and its staff finally dispersed in December 1942.

The 1 RM AA Bde headquarters in Ceylon had under command a Gunnery Operations Room Troop<sup>11</sup> (March to November 1942), as well as 1st and 2nd (Heavy) AA Rgts from December 1941 until May 1944, and for the period February 1942 to 29 August 1943, this HQ was designated HQ AA Ceylon,<sup>12</sup> with army units under command, including an RA Operations Room and RA batteries. There is a record of a Brigade HQ Battery from December 1942 to September 1943, no doubt to carry out Brigade (as opposed to Command HQ) functions. The Brigade was disbanded on 7 May 1944,<sup>13</sup> but its official disbandment is given in RMRO 719/44 as 16 May 1944, and after 5 RM AA Brigade had moved to Clacton, Essex, for training.

### **Air Defence Brigade MNBDO II later 2 RM Air Defence Brigade**

On 5 February 1941 the RM nuclei of AA and Searchlight Rgts joined army training establishments.<sup>14</sup> In March the AD Brigade HQ was established,<sup>14</sup> and by August 1942 had a Gunnery Operations Room which in the next 20 months worked with the Organisation's AA Regiments. This staff, both of the Brigade HQ and its Operations Room, became the HQ of 5 RM AA Brigade in the spring of 1944.

### **3 and 4 RM AA Brigades**

Not formed in World War II, but see below.

### **Artillery Staff Headquarters MNBDO II**

There is a record of this staff's existence from August 1942 to July 1943, with responsibility for artillery units attached to the Organisation.

### **5 RM Anti-Aircraft Brigade**

When the anti-aircraft regiments of MNBDO I and II returned to Scotland in February 1944, they were to be disbanded, but a general of the army's Air Defence Staff asked that some units be retained and from these — AA Bde HQ and Ops Room MNBDO II, 1st RM HAA Rgt (ex-MNBDO I), 3rd RM HAA Rgt (ex-MNBDO II), 4th RM LAA RGT (ex-MNBDO II) and a Signals Section (ex-MNBDO I) a 5 RM AA Brigade was formed on 22 March 1944<sup>16</sup> at Hamilton (Lanarkshire), under the command of Brig J. E. Leech-Porter, OBE. His Brigade came under army command of GHQ AA Troops three days later. It was then mobilised to Army War Establishments. During May and early June the Brigade spent six weeks at the army's AA practice camp at Clacton-on-Sea, Essex. Gunnery practice and mobilisation (with all this entailed in drawing stores) were carried on at the same time, some army HAA Regiments joining the brigade in May.

During July and August the Brigade's regiments were deployed against 'flying bombs' on the south coast of England, destroying 122 of these V1s.<sup>17</sup> The Brigade landed in France early in September (see chapter 7), and took over the anti-aircraft gunnery defences of the Scheldt estuary that winter, and in addition to RM formations had under command 111 HAA, 114 LAA and 133 LAA Regiments RA; 105 AA Brigade (12 army regiments); 6/2 and 415/54 Searchlight Batteries RA; and 202 Fixed Coastal Defences RA.

Makeshift accommodation was improvised with shacks and 'huts' along dykes (see chapter 7). Communications were also difficult with more than 2,000 miles of telephone line laid by the Brigade's signallers in a duplicate system; this connected all sites — guns, searchlights, smoke-generating machines, and operations rooms — the duplications proving invaluable after later air raids. All major units were also in wireless (radio) contact, the strength of Brigade signals units being raised from 80 to 200 personnel.<sup>18</sup>

The heavy gun batteries fired on occasions in support of ground troops during the first few weeks of October, but their principal role was to defend against air attack a 7,000yds circle covering Antwerp and the area to its west. When V1s began coming over on 27 October,<sup>19</sup> two zones or 'belts of AA fire' were organised around Antwerp and Brussels with a corridor between; there were American AA units (with SCR 584<sup>20</sup> radar-linked predictors and proximity fuses) in the east and south-east zones, and as the flight path of V1s brought them near to the Brussels defence zone, that could therefore contribute to Antwerp's defence.<sup>21</sup> The Brigade's Operations Room at Antwerp recorded 483 V1 and 313 V2 (rocket) incidents in the month to 12 December 1944. Units of the Brigade also formed rescue squads with equipment to help civilians buried in wrecked buildings after V1 and V2 explosions.

The German air activity increased in preparation for their Ardennes offensive. The last air attack on Antwerp, on New Year's Day 1945, was initially at low level (500ft), when the Brigade shot down four planes; around this time the V1 and V2 attacks intensified (see p. 228). The Brigade was relieved on 5 March 1945, and moved to Ostend.

The Brigadier took over as AADC for Ostend and Calais on 11 March. The last plot in the Brigade Operations Room was for a friendly aircraft on 6 May, and the Brigade returned to the UK some three weeks later on 28 May.<sup>22</sup> Brig S. G. B. Paine commanded the Brigade in the autumn of 1945.<sup>23</sup>

The Brigade was stationed at South Brent (Devon) in December 1945 when they were disbanded,<sup>24</sup> the HQ having been disbanded at Topsham, Devon, the month before.<sup>25</sup> The continuous service personnel returned to their Divisions and the 'HOs' were absorbed into the 27th and 28th RM Battalions.

### **RM Siege Regiment**

For origins see chapter 3. Lt-Col L. Foster was appointed CO and the Regiment's strength was reduced from some 700<sup>2</sup> to 300 in late 1942. The gun crews — in 'civvy' street a store manager, labourers, lorry drivers, a solicitor's clerk, a policeman, tradesmen and clerks among them — had long periods when the guns were not in action, and these men formed an infantry unit<sup>3</sup> with support weapons (a 74-mm gun, six Blacker Bombards, five MMGs and six 3-in mortars) for local defence in 1942.

The two heavy guns (described in chapter 3) were BL 14-in Mk VIIIs.<sup>4</sup> The supercharge of SC 500 cordite,<sup>5</sup> was not available in this strand size after 1944, as loaded in four quarter-charges. In the final shoots as the Allies entered Boulogne and Calais, virtually all the ammunition was used (see chapter 7) and the Germans fired their reserves of ammunition for their big guns, much of it into Dover, Kent.

The Regiment came under the command of the Vice-Admiral at Dover from August 1940 to 15 September 1940, and thereafter under the army command of XII Corps (which in January 1942 became HQ SE District).<sup>6</sup> In September 1941 the CO sought permission to use the guns offensively, for by that time the invasion of England seemed unlikely, and there was ample ammunition:<sup>7</sup> 350 rounds of HE for the 14-in, 400 rounds for the 13.5-in and spare barrels (2 for the 14-in and six for the 13.5-in). When *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* came through the Channel, however, the siege gun crews were doing infantry training and only two 14-in rounds were fired on predetermined coordinates,<sup>8</sup> a spot in the channel previously decided by XII Corps HQ. The ships had been picked up on coastal radar when 38 miles south of Hastings (East Sussex) at 1050 hours,<sup>9</sup> but the coast batteries were not told to fire until the ships had passed through the Channel, when the army's 9.2-in guns got three hits on a rapidly receding target.

The following month the Regiment manned the experimental 13-in gun named 'Bruce', after Vice-Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser.<sup>10</sup> Test firings into the sea south of Hastings were closely monitored, and some useful data collected on the ballistics of high trajectory and high velocity guns.

By 1942 the German long-range batteries were conserving ammunition against the day of an Allied invasion, and there was little activity until the Regiment fired its remaining rounds in September 1944, when the Germans were

being driven from the French coasts. The siege gun crews were then disbanded, many men going to Dalditch for the School of Mines,<sup>11</sup> a unit set up to train men in clearing Pacific beaches. but in November 1944 they were sent to RMTG (Wales), destined for the infantry battalions or the 34th Amphian Support Regiment. The Siege Regiment HQ was disbanded in March 1945.<sup>12</sup>

#### **RM Light AA Regiment/1st RM Light AA Regiment**

Formed in the summer of 1942 when the RM Division was setting up its organic artillery units;<sup>13</sup> 101 RM Brigade's artillery HQ staff provided the personnel for this Regiment's HQ. CO Lt-Col J. M. Fuller from 24 August 1942 to 31 July 1943. While under command of 101 RM Brigade, the Regiment's HQ was in the following locations, with the units commanded shown in brackets:

*24 August 1942:*

Near Fishguard (with 1st and 2nd LAA Btys and 1st AA/Anti-tank Bty).

*November 1942:*

Inverary on amphibious training (as for 24 August).

*December 1942:*

Sandbanks at Poole, Dorset for training shoots (as for 24 August).

*about 1 January 1943:*

Sandbanks — Regiment redesignated 1st RM Light AA Rgt.

*about 31 July:*

At Sandbanks Regiment disbanded, HQ personnel to Support Craft Regiment<sup>14</sup>.

#### **1st RM AA Regiment**

Formed in February 1940 as part of MNBDO I, with a cadre of officers and NCOs who had served in 1st RM AA Battery of 1939.<sup>15</sup> COs included: Maj L. O. Jones (Instructor of Gunnery), 15 February to 14 April 1940; Lt-Col J. E. Leech-Porter, 15 April to about December 1940; Lt-Col E. H. M. Unwin, January to May 1941; Lt-Col R. Garret, June to December 1941.<sup>16</sup>

The Regiment's HQ was in the following locations, with the units commanded shown in brackets:

*15 February 1940:*

Fort Cumberland when with COAST DEFENCE GROUP ('A', 'B' and 22 Light Batteries, with RA Trg Rgts in Arborfield, Carlisle and Blandford).

*mid-June 1940:*

Exton with AIR DEFENCE GROUP ('A', 'B' and 'R' [Searchlight] Btys<sup>17</sup> provided experimental Section and HQ from 'B' Bty<sup>18</sup> 'R' Bty under command June to September and later.

*February 1941:*

With AIR DEFENCE BRIGADE OF MNBDO I, at sea ('A', 'B', 'R' and 22nd RM LAA Btys).

*March 1941:*

Egypt (as for February).

*May 1941:*

Crete ('A' Bty in Crete, 'B' Bty in Sidi Barrani, North Africa).

*Summer 1941:*

Egypt mainly on internal security duties and aerodrome defence<sup>19</sup> ('A', 'C', 'R' and 22nd RM Light Btys).

*21 December 1941:*

Ceylon, HQ redesignated 1 RM AA Brigade, see unit history ('A' and 'C' Btys to 2nd RM (Heavy) AA Rgt. 'R' Bty to 11th RM (Searchlight) Rgt).

#### **2nd RM AA Regiment**

Formed with 'C', 'D' and 23rd RM Light Btys which were under training with RA Regiments.<sup>1</sup> First CO Lt-Col C. M. Sergeant, 15 April to 21 December.

The Regiment's HQ was in the following locations, with the units commanded shown in brackets:

*15 April 1940:*

With COAST DEFENCE GROUP, Arborfield ('C', 'D' and 23rd RM Light AA Btys).

*8 August 1940:*

With AIR DEFENCE Gt BRITAIN Matlock, Derbyshire (Btys as at 15 April).

*January 1941:*

With AIR DEFENCE BRIGADE MNBDO I, Portsmouth (Btys as at 15 April 1940).

*March 1941:*

Egypt (Btys as at 15 April 1940).

*May 1941:*

Crete ('C' Bty. elements of 23rd RM Light AA Bty and advance party from 'D' Bty).

*June 1941:*

Moascar, Egypt (after the Crete operation this Regiment had only elements of its three Btys with cadres from 'D' joining 'C' and some men from 22nd RM LAA Bty joining the 23rd RM Light AA Bty).

*21 December 1941:*

Cairo, the HQ became the 1st (Heavy) AA Rgt's headquarters,<sup>3</sup> 'C' and 'D' Btys to that Regiment and 23rd RM Light AA Bty to 2nd RM (Heavy) AA Regiment.<sup>4</sup>

*July 1942:*

Headquarters re-formed.<sup>5</sup>

*1943-4:*

Ocean fortresses on islands in Indian Ocean, the staff providing command facilities for AA defences.<sup>6</sup>

#### **1st RM (Heavy) AA Regiment**

Formed on the reorganisation of the Air Defence Brigade of MNBDO I in December 1941;<sup>7</sup> personnel of 2nd RM AA Rgt formed this HQ with 'B', 'C', and 'D' Batteries from 1st and 2nd RM AA Regiments ('B' Bty had been 'A' Bty of 1st RM AA Rgt). COs: Lt-Col C. M. Sergeant, December 1941 to August 1943; and Lt-Col R. Garrett, DSO, September 1943 to November 1945.<sup>8</sup>

The Regiment's HQ was in the following locations, with the units commanded shown in brackets:

*21 December 1941:*

With AIR DEFENCE BRIGADE MNBDO I, Cairo ('B', 'C' and 'D' Btys).

*1 February 1942:*

Colombo, Ceylon (as at 21 December 1941).

*11 March 1942:*

Colombo, although the HQ was in Ceylon, 'A' Bty was re-formed initially under its command, but as the Battery was in Cairo it was transferred to 2nd RM (Heavy) AA Rgt on formation.

*9 April 1942:*

Tricomalee, Ceylon when Batteries deployed in defence of the island. Malaria caused many casualties, 'D' Battery at one time having 92 per cent of its strength sick or convalescing. RA gunners were attached to make up the Batteries' strengths but all had returned to army units by June.<sup>9</sup>

*October 1942:*

Ceylon, the rounds per gun were reduced from 1,250 to 930<sup>3</sup> ('D' RM Heavy AA Bty, 'Devon' RM LAA Bty and 1 RM AA Signals Squadron, 'Devon' Bty handed over sites to 7 Bty Ceylon Garrison Artillery on 5 November 1942, see WO 172/1523).

*January and February 1943:*

Ceylon, days when petrol not to be used, to conserve fuel.

*15 April 1943:*

Poona, India, ('B', 'C' and 'D' Btys training with XXXIII Corps for operations in the Arakan, Burma).

*28 September 1943:*

Bhiwandi, near Bombay training for amphibious operations, practice shoots included low burst HE and anti-tank targets. Mobile Operations Room with improved techniques. Scales of equipment change to mobile 3.7-in guns and 22nd RM LAA Bty under command for defence of heavy AA guns ('B'(?), 'C', 'D' and 22nd RM LAA Btys).

*January 1944:*

Bhiwandi, preparing to return to UK after the Arakan operations were deferred.

*February 1944:*

Largs, Scotland, batteries were to be disbanded but retained for future service in Europe.

*March 1944:*

With 5 RM AA BRIGADE in Scotland all Batteries brought up to War Establishment of a mobile AA regiment on army scales ('A' came under command, 'B', 'C' and 'D').

*23 April 1944:*

22nd RM LAA Bty to 4th RM Light AA Regiment.

*May 1944:*

With AIR DEFENCE Gt BRITAIN, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex ('A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' at RA training camps).

*August to September 1944:*

With TWENTY-FIRST ARMY GROUP, Cherbourg in defence of this French port ('A', 'B', 'C', and 'D' Btys)

*19 October 1944:*

Antwerp in AA defences of Scheldt see chapter 7, and fired low airburst HE in support of Canadian Division West of Antwerp ('A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Btys).

*21 October 1944:*

With US ARMY 101 (AA) BRIGADE Louvain, near Brussels, all Batteries in 'Diver' belt defences, credited with 41 'kills' of V1s ('A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Btys).

*October and November 1944*

With CANADIAN DIVISION Schelt area, a Regimental Command Post was formed and FOOs worked with Canadian infantry (detached from time to time in a ground support role 'A', 'B', 'C', and 'D' Btys, in 44 days some 1,300 shoots were made at ground targets, firing air-burst HE).

*January 1945:*

With 5 RM AA BRIGADE Antwerp in air defence of port, and credited with four planes during low level attack on 1 January ('A', 'B', 'C', and 'D' Btys, except for one Troop of 'D' which was with US Army in 'Diver' belt and credited with 30 V1s<sup>10</sup>).

*March and April 1945:*

Ostend, all Batteries in coast defence role, on 18 April sank a midget submarine<sup>11</sup> ('A', 'B', 'C', and 'D' Btys).

*May 1945:*

Topsham, Devon with Batteries in By-Pass Camp near Exeter, personnel being demobilised but 'D' Battery retained as holding battery.

*16 November 1945:*

Topsham, HQ disbanded and personnel from 'D' Battery posted to 28th RM Battalion.

### **2nd RM (Heavy) AA Regiment**

Formed on the reorganisation of MNBDO I Air Defence Brigade in December 1941.<sup>12</sup> This HQ had only the 23rd RM LAA Battery under command until December 1942, when the heavy AA Battery 'A' came under command while still in Egypt, before the Regiment's HQ provided control staff for anti-aircraft defences in Indian Ocean bases. The Regiment returned to Scotland in February 1944 and 'A' Battery transferred in March to 1st RM (Heavy) AA Regiment. The Regiment's HQ was disbanded with the 23rd RM LAA Bty on 23 May 1944.

### **3rd RM (Heavy) AA Regiment**

Formed as a Regiment of MNBDO II Air Defence Brigade in January 1941.<sup>13</sup> the first CO was Lt-Col J. E. Leech-Porter.

The Regiment's HQ was in the following locations, with the units commanded shown in brackets:

*7 January 1941:*

With AIR DEFENCE BRIGADE MNBDO II Hayling Island, Hampshire<sup>14</sup> ('E', 'F' and 24th RM Light AA Btys).

*Winter 1941:*  
With AIR DEFENCE Gt BRITAIN on UK south coast ('E', 'F' and 24th RM Light Btys).

*3 August 1942:*  
With AIR DEFENCE BRIGADE MNBDO II in United Kingdom when all heavy AA batteries reorganised into heavy AA regiments ('E' and 'F' joined by 'G' and 'H' Batteries, 24 RM Light AA Bty transferred to 4th RM LAA Regiment).

*March 1943:*  
Batteries concentrated at Nottingham for embarkation.

*June 1943:*  
With various army commands as CORPS OR ARMY TROOPS Egypt batteries at various locations for defence of Suez Canal and other installations, gunners also employed on internal security ('E', 'F', 'G' and 'H' Batteries).

*July 1943:*  
HQ in Egypt with Batteries in defence of Malta prior to landing in Sicily ('E', 'F', 'G' and 'H' Batteries).

*15 July 1943:*  
With AIR DEFENCE BRIGADE MNBDO II Augusta, Sicily in defence of this port ('E', 'F', 'G' and 'H' Batteries).

*January 1944:*  
Augusta, Sicily, Batteries concentrated for embarkation. ('E', 'F', 'G' and 'H' Batteries).

*February 1944:*  
Scotland preparing for disbandment but retained ('E', 'F', 'G' and 'H' Batteries).

*March 1944:*  
With 5 RM AA BRIGADE Scotland, reorganised to a War Establishment of an army 3.7-in static regiment for Defended Ports Abroad, with Scale III equipment that limited each man to one battledress, one beret and so on until the winter ('E', 'F', 'G' and 'H' Batteries).

*May 1944:*  
Clacton-on-Sea, all Bakeries at army training camps ('E', 'F', 'G' and 'H' Batteries).

*June and July 1944:*  
With AIR DEFENCE Gt BRITAIN at various sites in UK ('E', 'F', 'G' and 'H' Batteries).

*August 1944:*  
With 5 RM AA DEFENCE BRIGADE Cherbourg in defence of this French port ('E', 'F', 'G' and 'H' Batteries).

*October 1944:*  
Antwerp air defences of Scheldt ('E', 'F', 'G' and 'H' Batteries).

*March 1945:*  
Ostend in coast defences ('E', 'F', 'G' and 'H' Batteries).

*May to November:*  
Southern England, Batteries demobilised and HQ disbanded (about November 1945).

#### **4th RM AA Regiment/4th RM (Light) AA Regiment**

Formed as a regiment of MNBDO II Air Defence Brigade about January 1941.<sup>15</sup>

Regiment's HQ was in the following locations, with the units commanded shown in brackets:

*January 1941:*  
With AIR DEFENCE BRIGADE OF MNBDO II Hayling Island ('G', 'H' and 25th RM LAA Btys).

*Winter 1941:*  
With AIR DEFENCE Gt BRITAIN on UK south coast ('G', 'H' and 25th RM LAA Btys).

*3 August 1942:*  
With AIR DEFENCE BRIGADE OF MNBDO II, Nottingham, the heavy Batteries 'G' and 'H' transferred to 3rd RM (Heavy) AA Rgt, and this Regiment redesignated 4th RM (Light) Regiment, with 24th, 25th and 26th RM Light Batteries redesignated as Light AA Btys. The '26th' had been the defence unit of AD Brigade's HQ to defend it against low-flying aircraft. (24th, 25th and 26th RM Light AA Btys, preparing for embarkation<sup>16</sup>).

*June 1943:*  
With VARIOUS ARMY COMMANDS Egypt Batteries at various locations (24th, 25th and 26th RM Light AA Btys).

*15 July 1943:*  
Augusta, Sicily (24th, 25th and 26th RM Light AA Btys).

*January 1944:*  
With AIR DEFENCE BRIGADE MNBDO II Sicily batteries concentrated for embarkation (24th, 25th and 26th RM Light AA Btys).

*March and April 1944:*  
Scotland 24th RM Light Bty disbanded at Motherwell on 11 April (25th and 26th RM Light AA Btys).

*23 April 1944:*  
With 5 RM AA BRIGADE in Scotland put on a War Establishment for light AA regiment of Defended Ports Abroad with Scale III equipment that limited each man to one battledress, one beret and so on until the winter (22nd, 25th and 26th RM LAA Btys).

*June 1944:*  
With AIR DEFENCE Gt BRITAIN Kent, all Batteries 'constantly in action' and by one report credited with 61 V1s, before units embarked for France (22nd, 25th and 26th RM LAA Btys).

*August and September 1944:*  
With 5 RM AA BRIGADE Cherbourg with all batteries in defence of this port (22nd, 25th and 26th RM LAA Btys).

*October and November 1944:*

Antwerp with guns in flooded areas often in single gun detachments, see Chapter 7. When 'Diver' belts set up the Regiments 54 Bofors defended 26 miles of quays in the dock area<sup>17</sup> (22nd, 25th and 26th RM LAA Btys).

*1 January 1945:*

Antwerp with Batteries in last action against major low-level attack (22nd, 25th and 26th RM LAA Btys).

*March 1945:*

Ostend deployed in coast defences (as above)

*May 1945:*

Ivybridge, Devon preparing for demobilisation (as above)

*30 September 1945:*

Ivybridge Regiment HQ, 25th and 26th Batteries disbanded, personnel from 22nd Battery to 'D' holding battery.

#### **11th RM Searchlight Regiment/ 'S' RM Battalion**

The coastal searchlight crews of MNBDO Nucleus provided some men for this Regiment's HQ, formed in February 1940 as part of MNBDO Air Defence Group (later Air Defence Bde, MNBDO I).

The Regiment's HQ was in the following locations, with the units commanded shown in brackets:

*14 February 1940:*

With AIR DEFENCE GROUP later AIR DEFENCE BRIGADE OF MNBDO I Yeovil, Somerset with Batteries training from 15 February with 220 Searchlight Training Rgt RA ('S' and 'R' Btys).

*about May 1940:*

Exton, Devon in tented camp ('S' and 'R' Btys).

*June 1940:*

18 June at Exton, HQ and 'S' Bty formed 'S' Battalion of infantry, as no searchlights available and on 26 June 'R' Bty transferred to 1st RM AA Regiment.

*Summer 1940:*

'S' Battalion deployed in UK defences

*20 September 1940:*

Deal, Kent, the Regiment's HQ and 'S' and 'R' Batteries again as searchlight unit.

*January 1941:*

Portsmouth 'R' battery reverted to 1st RM AA Rgt, HQ and 'S' Bty prepare for embarkation.

*March 1941:*

Egypt HQ and 'S' Bty in Canal Zone

*May 1941:*

Crete where HQ and 'S' Bty formed an infantry unit (see Chapter 3); many were taken prisoner.

*summer 1941:*

'R' Battery manned flares in Suez Canal defences as well as searchlights.

*July 1941:*

Batteries became independent, serving with forces on Indian Ocean islands under command of local headquarters.

*February 1943:*

With VARIOUS COMMANDS in Ceylon, the Regiments HQ had been re-formed and 'S' and 'R' batteries were again under command.

*summer 1943:*

Ceylon with Batteries in air defences ('S' and 'R' batteries).

*March 1944:*

With 1 RM AA BRIGADE Ceylon, Batteries concentrated for embarkation ('S' and 'R' batteries).

*May and June 1944:*

Scotland where 'S' and 'R' Batteries were disbanded on 15 May and Regiment's HQ in June.<sup>19</sup>

#### **12th RM Searchlight Regiment**

A Cadre of personnel from 11th RM Searchlight Rgt formed this 12th RM Searchlight Regiment in January 1941 as part of MNBDO II Air Defence Brigade.<sup>20</sup>

The Regiment's HQ was in the following locations, with the units commanded shown in brackets:

*1 January 1941:*

With AIR DEFENCE BRIGADE MNBDO II, South Hayling Camp, Hampshire ('N' and 'O' Batteries).

*June 1941:*

Truro, Cornwall, providing guide 'lights' for Allied airfields ('N' and 'O' Batteries).<sup>21</sup>

*winter 1941 and 1942:*

With AIR DEFENCE Gt BRITAIN on south coast of UK ('N' and 'O' Batteries).

*March 1943:*

Nottingham with Batteries concentrated for embarkation ('N' and 'O' Batteries).

*Early summer 1943:*

With VARIOUS ARMY COMMANDS in the Mediterranean when Batteries deployed in air defence in Egypt and Malta ('N' and 'O' Batteries).

*July 1943:*

Augusta, Sicily in air defences (as above).

*January 1944:*

With AIR DEFENCE BRIGADE MNBDO II Augusta where Batteries concentrated for embarkation (as above).

*April 1944:*

Burbank, Scotland, where HQ and 'N' and 'O' Batteries disbanded.

#### **RM Coast Brigade/1 RM Coast Brigade/1st RM Coast Artillery Regiment**

formed by MNBDO I on 15 February 1940<sup>22</sup> (when briefly known as RM Coast Defence Group) with recruits trained in 'B', 'C', 'G' and 'K' companies.<sup>23</sup>

The Regiment's HQ was in the following locations, with the units commanded shown in brackets:

*30 March 1940:*

With MNBDO I Eastney ('Kent', 'Devon', 'X' see 14 June 1942 below, 'Y' and Anti-MTB Btys, Land Defence Coy of which a platoon only formed, and Signals Section; 'Z' Bty formed at Harwich 13 May; and 'Y' Bty in Iceland).

*May 1940:*

'Devon' Bty was to become a howitzer battery, and no longer a part of the MNBDO War Establishment, memo from AGRM No. 2147/40S; but it was to train under MNBDO command and appears to have remained or been re-formed as part of this Regiment, see 31 March 1941 below.

*6 August 1940:*

Eastney with 'Hampshire' Bty formed ('Kent', 'Devon', 'Hampshire', 'X', 'Y', 'Z' and Anti-MTB Btys, Land Defence Coy, and Signals Section).

*1 January 1941:*

Portsmouth with Batteries being concentrated for embarkation and Regiment redesignated 1 RM Coast Brigade ('Kent', 'Devon', 'Hampshire', 'X', 'Y', 'Z' and Anti-MTB Btys, Land Defence Coy, and Signals Section).

*31 March 1941:*

Egypt Canal Zone and party sent to off-load ships in Palestine, 'Devon' Light AA Bty formed from cadres of 'Devon' and A-MTB Btys ('Kent', 'Devon' Light AA, 'Hampshire', 'X', 'Y', 'Z', Anti-MTB Btys, and Land Defence Coy[?], and Signals Section).

*May 1941:*

Crete with guns of 'Z' and 'X' Btys mounted, personnel later fighting as infantry; other personnel of this Coast Brigade with advance party in Crete see Chapter 3 ('Kent', 'Devon' Light AA, 'Hampshire', 'X', 'Y', 'Z', Anti-MTB[?] Btys and Land Defence Coy[?], and Signals Section).

*1 August 1941:*

Egypt after losses on Crete, the Brigade was reorganised with 'Z' Bty now independent of brigade and 'X' Bty disbanded ('Kent', 'Devon' Light AA, 'Hampshire', 'Y', A-MTB[?] Batteries and Land Defence Coy[?], and Signals Section).

*6 September 1941:*

Egypt and Indian Ocean islands, redesignated 1st RM Coast Artillery Rgt ('Kent', 'Devon' Light AA, 'Hampshire', 'Y', A-MTB[?] Batteries and Land Defence Coy[?], and Signals Section).

*winter 1941-2:*

Indian Ocean Batteries deployed in island base defences ('Kent', 'Devon' Light AA, 'Hampshire', 'Y', A-MTB[?] Batteries and Land Defence Coy[?], and Signals Section).

*5 April 1942:*

Ceylon ('Kent', 'Devon' by this date re-formed with 6-in coast defence guns, 'Hampshire', 'Y', A-MTB Batteries and Land Defence Coy[?], and Signals Section).

*14 June 1942:*

Ceylon in coast defences ('Kent', 'Devon', 'Hampshire', 'Y', A-MTB Batteries and Land Defence Coy[?], and Signals Section).

*1 August 1943:*

Ceylon all personnel to RM Coast Defence Rgt (later 3rd RM Coast Rgt) as infantry except 'Devon' Bty.

*January and February 1944:*

Ceylon, personnel of HQ to 3rd RM Coast Rgt and HQ disbanded; February 'Devon' Bty disbanded, although see unit history summary of this Battery.

## **2 RM Coast Brigade/2nd RM Coast Artillery Regiment**

Formed by MNBDO II in January 1941, with 'Y' Bty from 1 RM Coast Brigade providing cadres for new batteries.

The Regiment's HQ was in the following locations, with the units commanded shown in brackets:

*1 January 1941:*

Hayling Island ('Sussex', 'T' and 2nd Anti-MTB Btys).

*28 April 1941:*

With ARMY COAST DEFENCES FOR UK, Portsmouth ('Dorset' formed this day, 'Sussex', 'T', 'U' formed this day, 'W' formed this day, and 2nd Anti-MTB Btys).

*6 September 1941:*

Portsmouth(?) redesignated 2nd RM Coast Artillery Regiment.

*14 June 1942:*

'X' Battery re-formed from men at Geneifa (north of Port Tewfik) the Base Depot in Egypt, for deployment as an independent battery, although originally intended for this Regiment apparently.

*8 September 1943:*

HQ personnel provided staff for Coast Defence Station for about 12 months until January 1944.

*March 1943:*

With MNBDO II UK, Batteries concentrated for embarkation ('Dorset', 'Sussex', 'T', 'U', 'W', and 2nd Anti-MTB Btys).

*summer 1943:*

Egypt with Batteries deployed in training areas ('Dorset', 'Sussex', 'T', 'U', 'W', and 2nd Anti-MTB Btys).

*July 1943:*

Augusta, Sicily, with Batteries in coast defences ('Dorset', 'Sussex', 'T', 'U', 'W', and 2nd Anti-MTB Btys).

*Late summer 1943:*

With ARMY COAST DEFENCE COMMANDS, Italy, ('Dorset', 'Sussex', 'T', 'U', 'W', and 2nd Anti-MTB Btys).

*January 1944:*

Batteries concentrated for embarkation (as in late-summer 1943).

February 1944:

Largs, Scotland, HQ personnel to 1st Coast Rgt HQ<sup>24</sup> about this time and Batteries disbanded in the next few months but see Batteries unit history summary.

#### **RM Quick Firing (QF) Regiment**

Formed by MNBDO I in mid-May 1940 at the time of the German invasion of France.<sup>25</sup> The Regiment was part of 16 land batteries formed by Royal Naval personnel and largely staffed by officers from HMS *Effingham*, which had recently been sunk. The 41st RM QF Battery sailed for Dunkirk but was not landed (25–8 May) and was detached with eight 12-pdr Portees (guns on lorries) to 15 Division at Dunmow, Essex, during June and July. The other two Batteries, equipped like the '41st' were also detached: '42nd' to 5th Loyals at Crowborough, Sussex 20 May to 12 July; and '43rd' to 18 Division HQ at Norwich, Norfolk during May and June. These batteries, each of six officers and 165 other ranks, were all disbanded within 10 weeks of their formation.

#### **RM Field Artillery Regiment**

Formed at the time the RM Division established organic artillery units, by 102 RM Brigade's HQ at Dalditch from 10 September 1942.<sup>26</sup> Under command 16 October were 32nd Howitzer Bty, 2nd Anti-Tank Bty, 2nd Light AA Bty and 1st Field Bty forming at St Margaret's Bay, Kent, from men of the RM Siege Rgt. Plans were made to equip the field Batteries with 25-pdrs; two RA Field Btys were to be regimented with these RM Btys, but the arrangement was cancelled. The Regiment's HQ went to Tenby (South Wales) in November, but only elements of the Batteries under command went there for training with the RA. All but the Field Bty were transferred to the RM Anti-Tank Rgt before March 1943, when 1st RM Field Artillery Regiment was stationed at Christchurch, Dorset. A second field battery was formed on 1 June 1943, but on 12 August the first drafts from this Regiment were sent to the RM Siege Rgt as this built up again, and the RM Field Artillery Regiment was disbanded at Wimbourne, Hampshire, by the end of August 1943. Some men from this Regiment joined the RM Support Craft Regiment.

#### **RM Anti-Tank Regiment**

On the organisation of organic artillery for the RM Division, 102 Bde Artillery HQ took all but the Field Batteries from the RM Field Artillery Regiment to form the Anti-Tank Regiment at Dalditch, where the Regiment had under command 1st and 2nd Anti-Tank Btys and 31st and 32nd Light Btys. These units moved to Burry Port, South Wales for gunnery training on 6 November, and were mobilised there on 20 November. The Regiment moved to Bourne-mouth, Dorset, early in December, carrying out practice shoots on nearby ranges. In June 1943 the Regiment was concentrated at Wimborne, Dorset, and the Batteries redesignated Support Craft Batteries, before RM Anti-Tank Rgt HQ was disbanded on 31 July.<sup>27</sup>

## **ARTILLERY BATTERIES AND ASSOCIATED UNITS**

**1st RM AA Bty/RM Anti-Aircraft Battery of MNBDO Nucleus:** under army command in Alexandria, Egypt, August to 29 December 1939, see MNBDO Nucleus history summary. This was a battery of eight 3.7-in AA guns from army sources, in four two-gun Sections. It sailed for Egypt on 28 August 1939, in HMT *Lancashire* and apparently served in Egypt until absorbed into other units.

**Fort Cumberland RM AA:** under army/navy joint command in Portsmouth, September 1939, with 8 x 3.7-in guns from Fort Cumberland.

**1st and 2nd RM Anti-MTB:** the '1st' with Force Sturges in Iceland, May 1940, with 4 x 2-pdr Pom-Poms; served in air defence Devonport (Plymouth) in October 1940; later equipped with Bofors; redesignated 'Portsmouth' Battery in Ceylon August 1943. The '2nd' when in Falmouth with 2nd Coast Bde in 1941 had 4 x 2-pdr Pom-Poms and was later equipped with Bofors.

**1st RM Anti-Tank, 1st RM AA/Anti-Tank and 2nd RM Anti-Tank:** these Batteries initially had 2-pdr Portees in four Troops or 2-pdr Pom-Poms; by mid-March 1943 they had some 6-pdrs.

**1st and 2nd RM Light AA:** equipped on formation in November 1942 with Oerlikons on trucks and later with Bofors.

**1st and 2nd RM Field:** initially equipped with 8 x 18/25-pdrs and three armoured mobile Observation Posts (the '2nd' only existed for eight weeks in June/July 1943 and trained on 25-pdrs with RA at Harrogate, Yorkshire).

**1st, 2nd and 3rd RM Support Craft:** the '1st' became the 5th RM (Independent) Armoured Support Bty; the '2nd' became the 1st RM Armoured Support Rgt; and the '3rd' became the 2nd Armoured Support Rgt.

**4th to 20th RM:** no RM batteries with these numbers have been traced for the years 1919 to 1995.

**21st to 26th RM Light later RM Light AA:** initially equipped with 8 to 12 Pom-Poms; some subsequently had Oerlikons on lorries, but after Bofors guns became available, these Batteries were re-equipped. For example, the '22nd' when a Light AA Bty had 16 Bofors when serving with 1st (Heavy) AA Rgt in Ceylon during April 1943, at a time when army Bofors batteries were of 12 guns. The '22nd' were deployed to protect the heavy gun batteries from low-flying air attacks. Later the '22nd' had 18 Bofors and 12 Oerlikons on Hazard lorry-type mountings when in India in the autumn of 1943.

**RM Light Battery:** this battery went to Norway in 1940 with 3.7-in pack howitzers of an old design (see Chapter 2). The strength was eight officers and 123 other ranks. A memo from AGRM No. 2147/40S of 13 May 1940 directed that the men of this battery be deployed in re-forming 'Devon' Battery of coast guns with eight 3.7-in howitzers, and that they were to begin training with MNBDO Group but not to form part of the Group's War Establishment. But see unit history summary of 'Devon' Battery.

**31st and 32nd RM Howitzer later RM Light Btys:** initially equipped with 3.7-in howitzers, 'A' Section of the '31st' went to the Shetland Islands in May to July 1940. Other Sections, as part of the RM Division, had 3.7-in guns in lorries towing limbers, but this did not prove satisfactory. These units redeployed as 2nd RM Support Craft Bty (from the '31st') and in the 1st RM Support Craft Bty, after the gunners had trained on 25-pdrs.

**41st, 42nd and 43rd RM QF:** see unit history summary of RM Quick Firing Rgt.

**'A' to 'H' RM:** these were all heavy AA Batteries equipped with 8 x 3-in AA guns or later with 3.7-in AA guns.

**'I' to 'M' RM:** no trace has been found of RM batteries with these letters in the period 1919 to 1995.

**'N' and 'O', 'R' and 'S' RM:** these searchlight Batteries had — for example — six Guy lorry-mounted searchlights in 'N' Bty, at Truro, Cornwall, in 1941. These crews formed infantry units from time to time, and 'S' Bty on the voyage to Crete manned machine gun AA defences of HMT *Nieuw Zeeland* before later serving as infantry on this island. No trace has been found of 'P' and 'Q' Batteries.

**'T', 'U', 'W', 'X', 'Y' and 'Z' RM:** these Batteries were formed by 1941–2 as coast defence batteries, each had 2 x 4-in guns and were in the UK; 'T' Bty of 2nd RM Coast Rgt was at Eypemouth, near Bridport; 'U' and 'W' Btys of the same Regiment were at Bembridge, Isle of Wight; 'X' Bty in 1940 with MNBDO I was at Sunk Island, Yorkshire; 'Y' Bty from May 1940 to March 1941 was in Iceland before returning to the UK; at 'Z' Bty was at Harwich, Essex, in 1940. 'X' and 'Z' Btys were in Crete in May 1941 and suffered heavy casualties. 'X' was re-formed in Egypt in June 1942 and later served in Ceylon during 1942–3. 'Z' Bty served in 1941–2 on Addu Atoll in the India Ocean. These Batteries were initially equipped with 4-in guns on special Hazard Mountings, which made them mobile enough to be positioned once they had been landed in 1940–1; later the Batteries had other naval 4-in guns in conventional coast mountings at times. All Batteries but 'Y' were disbanded as of 15 May 1944 (RMRO 719/44). 'Y' Bty does not appear to have been reformed after personnel served in RM Coast Defence Rgt in August 1943.

**Kent RM, Chatham RM, Devon RM, Hants RM, Sussex RM and Dorset RM:** these coast batteries initially had 2 x 6-in guns and control posts or rooms; the guns were a naval type on coast defence mountings. In the summer of 1940 the Batteries were deployed as follows: 'Kent' detached from MNBDO I, sent to Lowestoft, Suffolk, with 3 x 6-in guns later handed over to Royal Artillery; 'Devon' in Iceland without guns, then to Folkestone, Kent, with 2 x 6-in but to be trained as Howitzer Battery May 1940, see 2nd Coast Rgt unit history; 'Hants' at Sheringham, Norfolk. During 1941–2 'Sussex' at Littlehampton, Sussex, and 'Dorset' at Portland, Dorset. Men of 'Hants' in Crete with 6-in guns but no mountings in May 1941. After service in Egypt at different periods, these heavy coast batteries were deployed in Indian Ocean islands bases — 'Kent' and 'Devon' on Addu Atoll ('Devon' on Hitadu Island) in September 1942, but sickness reduced both Batteries from their former strength to 50 men. 'Kent' was redesignated 'Chatham' when in the 3rd Coast Rgt at Katukurunda in Ceylon in August 1943. See also Coast Regiments' unit history summaries for deployment of these 6-in Batteries in Italy and Ceylon. Although some of these Batteries had been disbanded in practice before 15 May 1944, they appear to have continued as 'of record' until all were disbanded as of 15 May 1944 (RMRO 719/44).

**Devon RM Light AA:** formed from Devon RM Coast Battery's personnel *et al*, see 1 RM Coast Brigade unit history summary.

**Portsmouth RM:** with 3rd Coast Rgt in Ceylon August 1943, equipped with Bofors.

**St Angelo RM Light AA:** clerks, MOAs and other RM personnel of naval headquarters in Malta, manned Lewis guns in air defences from June 1940 to mid-January 1941, when they received two Bofors. The guns were sited near the upper barracks, with a third Bofors for a time in the wardroom garden. These crews worked in the base when not closed up, by May 1941 there were two crews for the pair of Bofors at the barracks. They could change a barrel in a little over 16 seconds. Among the crews' memories were the German G-mines with Bakelite wind baffles, low-flying aircraft and an issue of semi-armour-piercing shells. These shells were intended for use against Italian coastal forces which had raided the harbour on 25–6 July 1941. A 1,000lb bomb hit the Sergeants Mess that autumn, but heavy raids were not renewed until January 1942, the Battery later being showered from time to time with unexploded air defence rockets. The battery claimed over 50 planes, and crews were awarded a DSC and Bar, four DSMs and five 'Mentions'.

**RM Gun Location Battery:** formed by 1 RM AA Brigade for accurately surveying gun sites on map grid references, etc. A Gun Location Section for similar work was part of the HQ Wing of the Beach Units of MNBDO I and surveyed coastal as well as anti-aircraft sites.

**RM AA Operations Rooms:** in March 1942, 1 RM Air Defence Bde formed an AA Ops Room; in August a second Ops Room was formed by 2 RM Air Defence Bde. Personnel of this second Ops Room were later absorbed into the AA Ops Room of 5 RM AA Bde, when the Air Defence Brigade was disbanded in the spring of 1944.

**Signals detachments with artillery units:** in 1940 RM Batteries' communications were in army or navy signals networks in the UK, but when overseas the MNBDO Headquarters provided signals detachments. Some of these signallers formed the signals element of 5 RM AA Brigade's Operations Room in 1944–5.

**1st RM Survey Company:** with HQ of AA Command Ceylon and formerly and L & M Unit. In March 1944 absorbed by 5 RM AA Bde HQ and disbanded in December 1945 or soon afterwards.

## MNBDO SPECIALIST SUB-UNITS

### MNBDO I Units

**Landing and Maintenance Group/L & M Unit:** Formed in February 1940 but naval ratings for boat crews and some RM specialists did not join this Group until late in 1940. At that time some units that later became part of HQ Wing were commanded by this Group. Elements of the Group had been with the 6-in gun coast defence RM Batteries that summer, before they embarked for Egypt. The name 'Group' was changed to Unit on 1 April 1941, when the subunits' names were also changed, although their roles remained the same. The **Boat Unit** became the **Boat Company** with naval cutters and some landing craft when available, they were used for landing stores and equipment. By the summer of 1941 this Company was training with LCMs at Kabrit, Egypt. There were also two Companies equipped with scaffolding, concrete mixers, four Lister (TLC type) lorries, road roller, roller conveyor and other handling equipment for stores, pier building and making short sections of roadway.

In May 1941 the L & M Unit was in Crete, from where the majority of its personnel were successfully withdrawn. Early in 1942 they were deployed in building naval bases on islands in the Indian Ocean. The Unit formed a **Transport Company** and a **Workshop Company** in addition to **Nos 1 and 2 Companies** and the Boat Company. About this time the Unit moved to Ceylon.

The Unit went to India in 1943 for training with XXXIII Indian Corps and during this time, in October 1943 the **Beach Park Company** was formed. Its personnel prepared sites for stores dumps etc. in a beachhead.

**RM Survey Section/Survey and Meteorological Section/1st RM Survey Company:** formed in February 1940 as part of L & M Group, this Section provided maps and surveyors who located precisely the map grid reference of the gun positions of both AA and coast batteries, and advised on such matters as the guns' heights above sea-level, for calculation of the guns' ranges etc. The meteorological services for AA and coast batteries came under the command of this Section from about September 1943 to March 1944 (it does not appear to have had RM in its title as it included RN meteorologists) when it was attached to 1 RM Air Defence Bde in Ceylon. Before the L & M Unit returned to the UK with this Section, the naval meteorological officers left it, and the Section became the 1st RM Survey Company with HQ AA Command Ceylon (formerly 1 RM Air Defence Brigade HQ).

**RM Signals Company/RM Signals Unit:** formed in February 1940, its personnel were the signallers in an MNBDO. These specialist signallers served with both higher and lower formations (see chapter 3). Early in 1943 the signals Company was redesignated Signals Unit but continued to provide specialist supervision and training for detachments with various HQs including that of the Survey and Meteorological Section. The Unit came under command of 3 Mobile Naval Base in August 1943, but the detachment with 1 RM AA Bde HQ may have been redesignated Signals detachment AA Command Ceylon.

**HQ Wing:** formed on 5 March 1940, it eventually was comprised of the following — Camouflage Section; Beach Park Company (attached to L & M Units, see above); HQ Transport Company; Survey Section, which had two sub-Sections — Meteorological and Gun Location — both attached to 1 RM Air Defence Bde; Bomb Disposal Section; and other specialists under command from time to time, including medical units.

**Ordnance Depot:** formed in the 1920s as a small depot for MNBDO-type stores, it was expanded in the spring of 1940, moved to Egypt in 1941, and in 1943 moved to Ceylon before returning to the UK in 1944. Most of the specialist stores were then retained at Fort Cumberland.

### MNBDO II Units

**HQ Wing:** formed in March 1941, by December 1943 the units and sub-units under command included four Street major units — Ordnance Depot, Group Supply Unit, Medical Services and Boat Unit — and a number of specialist smaller units. While in the UK the Wing was deployed in training exercises before embarking for Egypt. The Wing's Units were deployed to various locations before going to Sicily and Italy in support of naval parties as well as MNBDO forces.

**Landing and Maintenance Unit:** formed in January 1941, and with effect from 1 October 1942, 'X' company of the 19th RM Battalion became No. 3 Company of this L & M Unit. By December 1943 it had four companies — Landing, Ship Unloading, Pioneer/Defence and Engineer — which while in the UK trained both in port operating and in amphibious landings. On arriving in Egypt in the summer of 1943, the Companies were on occasions employed in the roles for which they had trained, but not until they landed at Augusta, Sicily, were they able to make full use of their special training, as they did later in Italy.

### BEACH UNITS

#### **RM Beach Battalion/RM Beach Unit HQ/QG RM Beach Group**

The RM division formed this Battalion<sup>1</sup> on 7 July 1941 at Warblington Camo, Havant near Portsmouth. First CO Lt-Col J. P. Phillipps whose Battalion had two roles: to land RM Division and its stores, holding the beach area as the Division moved inland; or when elements of the Division were used in a raid, to cover its subsequent withdrawal and to reload stores. In both roles the division expected to organise the flow of ammunition and stores over an open beach, having cleared paths through mine fields, created beach exits, laid roads and built light-weight piers. Much of the landing concept, however, appears to have been built around the off-loading of ships into MLCs, for the LST and LCT had not been brought into service — the first LCT did her trials in November 1941. The HQ Company of 1941 had an AA Platoon and an Administrative Platoon, and three Beach Companies. Each Beach Company had a Beach Platoon of four Sections and a Ship Unloading Platoon with six gangs to work in holds, its equipment included or was

to include: four bulldozers; four dumpers; and 200yds of Briggs Roadway. In all 1,050 personnel, with No. 4 Signals Company attached from the Division's signallers.

While in the UK the Ship Unloading Platoons did stevedores' work in Southampton docks, and 'picked men' supplemented AA gun crews on escort and anti-submarine destroyers. One sub-section aboard HMS *Fernie* on the night of 4–5 May 1942, engaged German E-boats with two Brens on Motley mountings, helping the ship's guns to sink one of the boats. After various exercises, it became clear that the Beach Battalion could only land two infantry battalions, but it had few opportunities to practice with LCTs when these first came into service.

The Beach Battalion HQ had been redesignated Beach Unit HQ in September 1942, and in October became HQ RM Beach Group and the Companies formed 1 and 2 Beach Groups, but by January 1943 the special nature of RM Beach Group had become impractical — see below. On 10 May 1943 the name of HQ RM Beach Group was again changed to QGRM Beach Group (at that date the logistical staff was known as Quartermaster General's staff); and its function changed in August 1944 to the HQ for training the two intended beach battalions 27th and 28th RM Bns, before these subsequently went overseas as infantry battalions with 116 RM Brigade. It then acted as their rear HQ in the UK, and remained in existence as QG RM Beach Group until January 1945, if not until that spring.

#### **1 and 2 RM Beach Groups/1 and 2 RM Landing Groups**

Both formed<sup>2</sup> in October 1942 from Companies of the Beach Battalion, these Groups did a series of amphibious exercises: at Emsworth, Hampshire; in Scotland; and at Christchurch, Dorset. In May 1943 their names were changed to 1 RM and 2 RM Landing Group respectively; but these Groups needed an army War Establishment, so that follow-up units could also be handled by these RM Groups and not just RM battalions with their special organisation. Therefore the RM Groups were disbanded at Christchurch on 31 July 1943, the personnel going to the Holding Unit of the RM Division.

#### **1st Middle East Beach Brick/Beach Brick 31**

The 7th RM Battalion was the nucleus around which the first Middle East Beach Brick was created (see Chapter 5); and when the Brick was enlarged in 1943 as Brick 31, they prepared to land in Sicily with 231 Brigade. During the early stages of the build-up, 7th RM Bn remained with the Brick but on D+7, the Battalion reverted to an infantry role under XXX Corps.

#### **Force X/RM Detachment 300**

This force initially comprised an RM Ship Unloading Company, RM Engineers and landing craft crews serving under RN command in Iceland from July 1940 to June 1942. There they handled stores and other work at the RN Repair Base at Hvítanes. (The LC Flotilla subsequently went to New Guinea in the late summer of 1944.<sup>3</sup>) In February 1943 another Force X was formed at Deal with 480 RM Engineers, kitted for shore service but with sea kit bags. Each man had a rifle, 50 rounds of ammunition and the Force had three days rations. Its postal address was RM Detachment 300. Having had embarkation leave, the Detachment was ready for overseas service by 12 March 1943 (RM Circ 123/26/43QS dated 3 February 1943). Elements of Force X or possibly men from Detachment 300 were still in Iceland in 1944.

## **OTHER MOBILE BASE UNITS**

#### **MOLCAB I**

The Mobile Landing Craft Advanced Base<sup>4</sup> (Naval Party 2400 *Landswell*) was formed January/February 1945, under Col C. M. Sergeant, OBE, DSC, to provide shore base facilities for minor landing craft flotillas and their maintenance units operating away from their parent carrier ships (LSIs) on ferry services, etc. in the Far East. MOLCAB I sailed from the UK for Australia in February and served in Singapore before returning to the UK and being disbanded in the autumn of 1945.

#### **MOLCAB II**

Similar unit<sup>5</sup> to MOLCAB I above, formed in February 1945 as Naval Party 2401 *Landlock*, under Col C. S. N. Smith. Due to sail in March 1945 for the Pacific, it was not employed operationally before World War II ended.

#### **MOLCAB III**

Similar to MOLCAB I, formed at Hayling Island Camp (Northney II) in February 1945,<sup>6</sup> (as Naval Party 2402) with older personnel than in other MOLCABs. COs were: Lt-Col E. C. Hoar, February to 29 April 1945; and Lt-Col J. P. Kelly. It was joined by No. 6 Mobile Base Maintenance Unit (MBMU 6). The base personnel were shipped to Antwerp by LST, where they transhipped stores to set up, with 'Red', 'Blue', and 'White' Camp teams, three bases in the Boreham area, near Antwerp. From these camps the engineer ratings of MBMU 6, joined by Landing Craft Repair Unit No. 8 and a naval crane party (with 4 x Bay City cranes), maintained 660, 661, 821, 822, 823 LC Flotillas of Force U, which were ferrying stores. In mid-April 1945 this Force became Ferry Squadron Force T. In May MOLCAB III moved to Nijmegen to set up camps for the maintenance personnel of the flotillas ferrying men and cargoes on the Rhine. The next month they returned to the UK and were disbanded, as the majority of the personnel were due to be demobilised.<sup>7</sup>

#### **MOBLABs IV, V AND VI**

Although 'IV' was formed in April 1945, both 'V' and 'VI' did not complete their formation, begun in July 1945, and all three were disbanded later that year.<sup>8</sup> Only 'IV' has been identified as a Naval Party (NP 2003).

#### **MOLCAB Assembly Base**

This RN command on Hayling Island (HMS *Dragonfly*) became an RM command on 12 July 1945, CO Lt-Col T. P. Honnor, but the base was disbanded that autumn.

### **MOBILE NAVAL AIR BASES (MONABS)**

Eleven of these had reached the planning stages by August 1945, and two battalions of RM Engineers had reached Australia to join Naval Party 580, who were to build the intermediate forward air base at Manus, in the Admiralty Islands, and had reached Australia early in 1945. Other detachments were assembling with 79 all ranks, including 30 tradesmen being drafted to MONAB XI that August. But the MONABS IX, X and XI were not deployed. In August most of the others were in Australia, with MONAB I (*Nabbington*) at Nowra (New South Wales), 'II' (*Nabberly*) at Bankstown (NSW), 'III' (*Nabthorpe*) with the 2nd RME Battalion at Schofields, 'IV' (*Nabborrow*) had elements at Manus in the Admiralty Islands, 'V' (*Nabswick*) was at Nowra (NSW) in 1946, 'VI' was with 'III', and 'VIII' (*Nabbatcher*) served in Hong Kong. 'IV' was probably the TAMY (*Nabsford*) at Archerfield. All were disbanded as World War II ended before bases were required. Some of the personnel worked on restoration on harbour or other facilities before returning to the UK.

### **Ocean Fortresses**

In September 1941 Col (later Brigadier) C. T. Brown reconnoitred Addu Atoll, as a result MNBDO I provided 500 all ranks in force 'Overt'. This force was commanded by Brig C. T. Brown until he was killed in a flying accident, he was succeeded by Brig Lukis. The personnel of 'Overt' installed guns on; Addu Atoll; on other islands including those in the Seychelles; and on a tiny atoll in the Chagos Archipelago some 1,000 miles south-west of Ceylon.<sup>10</sup> This small atoll of Diego Garcia would become familiar to Marines serving there in the 1990s with NP 1002. It is hot and humid with no land over six feet above sea level. During 1942 the landing points were blasted in the coral on these islands and roads were built linking the landing points to gun sites. Telephone cables were laid and a number of bridges were built for the Addu Atoll sites. In the autumn of 1942 the L & M Units of MNBDO I and RM Engineers returned to Addu Atoll to build Gan aerodrome.<sup>11</sup> Although this airfield was abandoned after World War II, it was rebuilt in the 1950s as an RAF staging post, and is used by the USAF in the 1990s. (See also Naval Party 1002).

## **ARMoured SUPPORT FORMATIONS**

### **RM Armoured Support Craft Regiment**

Formed at Merley House Camp, Wimborne<sup>12</sup>, Dorset, during July and August 1943<sup>13</sup> from ranks of the RM Division's artillery units, it was reorganised in September with an HQ, 1, 2 and 3 Batteries, each with three Troops, and a Holding Battery. From 18 October the Regiment was under the direct command of AGRM (see RM Circ 7399/43). The personnel wore combined operations flashes. In each Troop were four detachments for LCGs,<sup>14</sup> but these became the nuclei of units in the Armoured Support Group after the Batteries moved to Le Marchant Barracks in Devizes, Wiltshire, as of 18 October 1943. The HQ was disbanded about March 1944.

### **RM Armoured Support Craft Group**

Formed on 14 March 1944, this Group would command the two RM Armoured Support Regiments and an RM Independent Battery of Centaur tanks. It was commanded by Brig D. C. W. Sanders, OBE, AFC, who had been CRA of the RM Division. He was killed when this HQ was in Normandy in June 1944 and succeeded by the second-in-command Col A. J. Harvey, OBE.<sup>15</sup> See also HQ Wing (below). The small tactical headquarters was staffed by RM officers who developed: first, the techniques for firing engineless tanks on Bailey bridging in LCT(Adapted); and later, the methods of firing and control for these Centaurs with their engines replaced.

The headquarters returned to the UK in late June 1944 after several weeks in action, and on being disbanded that autumn the personnel were transferred to the 29th RM Bn, later forming the 34th Amphibian Support Regiment.

### **1st and 2nd RM Armoured Support Regiments**

Formed in the spring of 1944, each with two Batteries, these Regiments were landed from LCT(Armoured), being LCT(Adapted) that had been modified. The HQs, each of some 40 all ranks, were mainly administrative, and only the tactical portion of two officers and two other ranks landed with the Batteries on 6 June 1944 in Normandy. The Regiments' personnel included RA officers and RA gunner-drivers, with RAC fitters and mechanics, but the majority were RM gunners, including those who had trained for LCG(L)s. Many of the HQ staff transferred ultimately to the 34th Amphibian Support Regiment, after the armoured Support Regiments were disbanded in the autumn of 1944.

### **1st RM, 2nd RM, 3rd RM, 4th RM and 5th RM (Independent) Support Batteries**

The '1st' and '2nd' were in the 1st RM Armoured Support Regt, the '3rd' and '4th' in the 2nd RM Armoured Support Regt, and the '5th' was an independent Battery. Each had four Troops with its Left and Right Sections. Troop commanders were in Sherman tanks, with the two Centaurs of the Left Section, in one LCT(A). The Right Section of two Centaurs were in a second LCT(A). Operationally Batteries Nos 1 to 4 had no tactical HQ, as Troop commanders worked to their local artillery commands, therefore the Batteries' cooks and quartermasters landed in follow-up waves. After the initial landings described in chapter 6, the Batteries were used as independent units. The tanks of the '1st' and '2nd' supported 4 (Army) Commando and 48 RM Commando; the '3rd' and '4th' supported the Canadians, being deployed 3,000yds forward of the Canadian artillery. Troops from these last two Batteries assisted 46 RM Cdo on D+1 (7 June), and a Troop from the 5th RM Battery crossed the Orne river to give counter mortar fire in support of 4 SS (Commando) Brigade, among several independent actions by these Batteries before they were withdrawn on 24 June. By this time some 50 per cent had had mechanical failures. Although they had been intended as purely assault troops, they had stayed in action for almost three weeks and proved a valuable supplement to conventional artillery.

The Centaurs' 95-mm gun-howitzer had many parts in common with the 25-pdr, and as a totally protected gun in a turret was less vulnerable than self-propelled artillery. These tanks were taken over by RA gunners before the Batteries' personnel returned to the UK for disbandment on the formation of 29th RM Battalion on 3 October 1944, this Battalion later became the 34th RM Amphibian Support Regiment.

### **RM Armoured Support Group HQ Wing and holding Battery**

This Wing included 65 RAC mechanics under command of five RAC officers,<sup>16</sup> and 50 RM reserves for tank crews. These mechanics, assisted by RM tank crews, made exceptional improvisations to keep the tanks in action, despite the limited facilities available.

### **34th RM Amphibious Support Regiment**

Formed under War Office control from the 29th RM Battalion on 1 March 1945, with a War Establishment of 43 officers and 725 other ranks,<sup>17</sup> including some army personnel. The Regiment arrived in India on 8 May 1945, and was to have come under command of the Commando Group later that year. The Regiment's 1st and 2nd RM Support Batteries were equipped with LVT(Armoured), the 3rd RM (Rocket) Battery with LVT(Rocket), and the 4th RM Battery with LVT(Flamethrower). But the only operations carried out by this Regiment were in south East Asia, where it was equipped as infantry and employed on internal security operations for a short time in 1945. The Regiment returned to the UK in 1946, after carrying out internal security duties in India, and was disbanded that autumn.