

## **THE ROYAL MARINES & FORT CUMBERLAND**

First built in 1746 on the eastern tip of Portsea Island, protecting the flank of Portsmouth some miles west across the marshes, the fort was later rebuilt in a star-shaped design.

After the formation of the Royal Marine Artillery in 1804, the Companies that were attached to the Portsmouth Division of Royal Marines required a base to exercise and train with their field artillery and naval cannons. From 1817 Fort Cumberland was used, and from 1858 it became the Head Quarters for the RMA Division until Eastney Barracks was completed in 1867. The fort continued to be used by the RMA for training and gun repository until, in 1923, the Royal Marine Light Infantry and Royal Marine Artillery amalgamated into the present day Corps. From this date, the Royal Marines used the fort to form a number of specialist units, and develop and train technical and trades personnel until finally leaving the fort in 1973, when this element of the Corps deployed to RM Poole, in Dorset.

### **ROYAL MARINES & FORT CUMBERLAND: CHRONOLOGY**

- **1747** January, work commenced on the original star fort; between 1794 and 1820, it was redesigned and rebuilt.
- **1817** June, four companies of RMA permanently deployed at the Fort.
- **1827** 13<sup>th</sup> August, RMA inspected by Duke of Clarence (Lord High Admiral, William IV), including mortar battery firing and gun repository.
- **1858**, Fort exchanged from War Office to Admiralty for Gun wharf Barracks. RMA Divisional HQ until completion of Eastney Barracks (1865-70). RMA also deployed at Forts Elson & Monckton until 1864.
- **1867-** RMA used the fort principally for land gunnery, mortars, and repository. Sea service gunnery was undertaken at the Sea service batteries constructed at Eastney and the RMLI Divisions. HMS Excellent trained gunnery instructors (RMA and RN).
- **1895** High Angle Fire Battery added.
- **1905** Electricity provided at the Fort & Eastney.
- **1913** Lt. Wildman-Lushington RMA took off in a Short Biplane across the forts' musketry range and Glacis.
- **1914-18** Fort became the base for the RMA Brigades. Howitzer, AA, and Heavy Siege Train, plus smaller units. Drivers for the 100bhp Tractors were also trained there.
- **1919** An AA and Coastal wing was established and naval bombardment training undertaken.
- **1930** Most of the forts' defensive guns were dismantled or cut up.
- **1924-37** The base for 'X Organisation' later MNBDO. Coast and AA gunnery, 4" & 6" gun repository, searchlight and sound locator training. Surveying, motor transport and mobile workshop, pier building and also landing craft development were undertaken. A combined operations office was also installed and personnel included Army & Navy contingents.

- **1935** Fort designated school of Land Artillery.
- **1938** Inter Services Training & Development Centre (ISTDC) set up at the fort.
- **1939** RM man eight 3" AA guns within the Fort.
- **1940** February, 'A', 'B', and 22 Light Batteries of Coast Defence Group have their HQ within the fort.
- **1940** 26<sup>th</sup> August, about fifty He111's of KG51 with their escorts drop 78 bombs on or around the Fort (the intended target said to have been HMS Dolphin Submarine Base). Eight RM Officers & Men were killed. During the war some 4000 men were trained there for MNBDOs.
- **1945** By the end of the war the Technical Training Depot was running 20 trades courses, including drivers, mechanics, etc.
- **1958** The Technical Training Wing is organised in three sections, driver & motor cyclist platoon, technical trades, and group workshops. Trades are as follows
  1. Armourer (small arms)
  2. Bricklayer/Plumber
  3. Carpenter
  4. Coach trimmer
  5. Draughtsman
  6. Electrician
  7. Painter
  8. Printer
  9. Sheet Metal worker/welder
  10. Storeman/clerk
  11. Vehicle Mechanic/Armament Artificer.
- **1959** Fort is designated an ancient monument.
- **1970** Technical trades training is transferred to RM Poole
- **1973** RM leave Fort.