

A Short History of the Royal Marines

October 1664 an Order was issued calling for soldiers to be recruited



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On the 28th in-Council 1200 for service in the Fleet, to be known as the Duke of

York and Albany's Maritime Regiment of Foot. As the Duke of York was The Lord High Admiral, it became known as the Admiral's Regiment. The Regiment was paid by the Admiralty, it and its successors being the only long service troops in the 17th and 18th century navy.

They were therefore not only soldiers but also seamen, who were part of the complement of all warships. In 1704, during the war with France and Spain, the British attacked the Rock of Gibraltar: 1,900 British and 400 Dutch marines prevented Spanish reinforcements reaching the fortress.

Later, British ships bombarded the city while marines and seamen stormed the defences. These later withstood nine months of siege. Today the Royal Marines display only the battle honour "Gibraltar", and their close relationship with the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps continues.

Throughout the 18th and 19th century the Corps played a major part in fighting to win Britain the largest empire ever created. Marines were aboard the first ships to arrive in Australia in 1788. The policy of "Imperial Policing" took the Marines to the bombardment of Algiers in 1816, to the Ashantee Wars, and to the destruction of the Turkish Fleet at Navarino in 1827. In 1805 some 2700 Royal Marines took part in the great victory at Trafalgar. Closer to home, they maintained civil order in Northern Ireland and in Newcastle during the coal dispute of 1831. By the outbreak of war in 1914, Britain had the largest fleet in commission in the world, with all ships above that of destroyer size having Royal Marines detachments. Onboard ship, marines were required to operate one of the main gun turrets, as well as secondary armament. Royal Marines also fought on land, notably in the amphibious assault at Gallipoli in 1915, together with ANZAC forces, and led the famous assault on the harbour at Zeebrugge in 1918.

During World War Two some 80,000 men served in the Royal Marines, and they continued to operate at sea and in land formations, but 1942 saw the formation of the first Royal Marines Commandos. 5 RM Commandos were amongst the first to land on D Day, and two thirds of all the landing craft involved were crewed by



Royal Marines. 16,000 members of the Corps took part in Operation "Overlord" in many roles, some even manning tanks.



After the war the Royal Marines spent much time in action in the Far East, including involvement in the Malayan emergency and in Borneo, and also in Korea, Suez, Aden, and Cyprus.

In 1982, the Royal Marines played a major part in recapturing the Falkland Islands from the Argentinians, and in 1991 they participated in the Gulf War, mounting a sizeable humanitarian task force – Operation HAVEN, in

support of the Kurdish people of Northern Iraq.

This was the start of a particularly busy decade for the Royal Marines. In 1994 a commando unit flew to Kuwait following threats by Iraq. The next year the Royal Marines provided the commander and staff for the Rapid Reaction Force in Bosnia, and in 1997 and 1998 a Commando Unit flew to the Congo Republic to protect British interests. In the same period help was provided to the local populations of Montserrat in the West Indies following a volcano eruption, and in Central America following a hurricane. The last two years have seen elements of the Royal Marines on operations in Northern Ireland (where they have completed some 39 tours of duty since 1969), Kosovo, and Sierra Leone. In addition, while few ships now have the traditional RM detachment aboard, Royal Marines Protection Parties join ships as necessary, and have served in such diverse places as Albania, and East Timor, where they worked closely with Australian



forces.



With the introduction and successful operational deployment of the Landing Platform (Helicopter), HMS OCEAN, and the launch of HMS BULWARK and HMS ALBION, as successors to the in-service Landing Platform (Dock) the amphibious capability of the Royal Marines is greatly increased, and becomes a key element in the country's capacity to intervene in areas of conflict overseas. This was proven by the ability of 40 Commando RM to remain in the Gulf area following exercises in Oman during October 2001, available to participate in the war in Afghanistan when needed. With further additions to the amphibious fleet, and a wide range of new equipment coming into service, the Royal Marines are as ready as ever to meet the nation's need for a flexible force that can poise at sea, and intervene in areas of trouble at an early stage.