

PREFACE TO
FROM BOY BUGLER TO BUGLE MAJOR

IT REALLY GOT ME THINKING

A while ago I had a phone call from a former Drum Major, Royal Marines, who I had served with and in later years had got to know as an equal. He had phoned to tell me that a mutual friend had passed away and wanted to know if I would be attending the funeral. As this sort of phone call had happened a few times in the past when one of my old chums had passed away and gone to that Massed Bands parade in the sky, I confirmed that I would attend the funeral but, "It really got me thinking". The reason it got me thinking more than anything else was because the old chum who had passed away was none other than a former Bugle Major, Royal Marines, by the name of 'Tex Rickard'. The only difference in our surnames was that mine is finished off with 's' making me Rickards. This still didn't stop some neighbours looking surprised to see me walking around after reading the obituary in the local paper. Well.... since that funeral I have been thinking quite a bit about the future and, as we all know, "One thing to be sure of in life is that we are all going to die sometime". So, with that in mind I have decided to write a few chapters on my life. I think some of it is quite funny and I hope it will at least prove to be interesting.

My prime thought is to make a recording of my life so that my adult children, and anyone else who might be interested in my existence might read this in days to come and get to know the life I have lead.

If as a result of this effort I hurt anyone's feelings I am sorry, but I will try to relate how things happened and I will try to keep poetic licence to a minimum.

I make no apologies for the content, spelling or layout of what is to follow as I did not have a very advanced education and as with most things in my life, I taught myself.

FROM BOY BUGLER TO BUGLE MAJOR

CHAPTER ONE

I JOIN THE ROYAL MARINES

So it was at the tender age of fifteen years and three months, I joined the Royal Marines as a Boy Bugler on the 26th August 1946.

Having left school and worked for over a year I was quite an independent sort of person, but I had never left home before.

Still, I was lucky, the Royal Marine Barracks was in Plymouth, my home was in Plymouth so that wouldn't be so bad...so I thought!

Well, on the 26th August 1946 I presented myself at the Royal Marine Barracks Stonehouse and with five other lads I enlisted in the Corps for a period of twelve years, but my service time would not count until I reached the age of eighteen years.

That meant, in service terms, that all time spent in the Corps until attaining the age of eighteen, was 'girls time' and didn't count towards regular service.

Lets see who else joined at the same time as me and formed 'our class'.

There was 'Pusser' Alan Moyse, whose family had served in the Royal Marines since the year 1774 and who were about when Captain Cook took part in the siege of Gibraltar. Then there was 'Eddy' Hensman, whose uncle was a Quartermaster Sergeant Major in the barracks. Next there was 'Ron Budgen, an ex entrant of a Naval Training Establishment somewhere from 'up the line'. What I remember about him more than anything else was that he had a mastoid operation that left quite large cavity behind one of his ears that always looked 'yucky'. Then there was 'Bagsy' Baker who came from Exeter, who I didn't know much about. Last, but not least there was a young man from Scotland who stayed with us for about two days and was then discharged and returned to Scotland.

I really don't know what happened to most of my 'old class' but I do know that Alan Moyse left the Corps before completing time for pension.

What a change in life....where shall I start?

Right! We were directed to a barrack room which was to be our 'home' for the future. We were each allocated a bed and the space around it, which was to be our own area. We didn't know exactly how long we would be there, but we were told that we would be a class until we 'passed out'. That was explained to us and it meant when we were good enough on Bugle and Drum we would be examined and if satisfactory we would then become 'Passed Out' Buglers. Which meant our basic training had been completed and we would then be known as Duty Buglers and that afforded certain privileges, and we would be available to be 'drafted'. [posted as a bugler to an Establishment or to a Ship]

I remember the first few days of my service were quite hectic. We were marched to the sick quarters [service hospital] where we received various inoculations and vaccinations. Then to the

stores where we were issued with our kit. We each had two kitbags and as we progressed along a very long counter various items were flung at us which were immediately stowed in one or other of our kitbags. Next, we were marched [we marched everywhere from then on] to the 'marker's shop' where we were each given a wooden 'type' which was a piece of wood on which one side had been hand carved with our individual name, and on the other side was carved our official service number. The type was then pressed onto a pad containing marking ink and every item of the kit we had been issued with was marked. The items of kit that could not be marked with the type had our service number stamped on with a metal stamp.

Being a 'hoarder' I still have the 'Type', I was issued with in those far off days together with the knife, fork and spoon.

After all the kit had been marked we returned to our barrack room. After depositing our kitbags on our beds we were marched to the Armoury where for some reason they kept, amongst other things, Bugles and Drums.

There we were each issued with a Bugle, Bugle Cord, a Military Side Drum, a pair of Drumsticks a white buckskin leg guard and a drum sling. The sling was slung around the neck and used to carry the drum. The buckskin leg guard was supposed to protect the leg of our trousers whilst carrying the drum but, as in those days the leg guard was cleaned with white blanco, we very soon discovered that the blanco did more damage to our trousers than the drum ever would have. In those days the shell of the drum was made of brass and like everything else, had to be cleaned. The heads were of vellum and the whole works was held together with a long rope that was threaded through the top and bottom wooden hoops.

The bugle was of copper and every visible part had to be cleaned. We were all issued with bugles which had seen better days and there was an abundance of dents that certainly didn't help when it came to cleaning.

We were taught how to attach the cord to the bugle with a special knot and also how to shorten the cord with a plait so that when worn the bugle rested on the right side of the body within easy reach of the right hand.

Our rank on joining was 'Boy Bugler' but our badge of rank which was worn on the right sleeve, just above the elbow was a 'Drum'. Even today the badge of rank for a Bugler Royal Marines is still a 'Drum'.

The reason for this has been explained by the fact that prior to the introduction of the Bugle, our predecessors were Drummers and were known as 'Drummers'. Prior to the introduction of the Bugle, drummers also played fifes. Some naval officers still refer to Buglers as 'Drummer, but of course, it takes all sorts.

Let me explain: The Royal Marines comprises of three very different types of entrant.

These are simply explained. A Royal Marine, whether he serves in a Commando Unit or on one of H.M. Ships, is the fighting man. Next there is the Musician, who, although forms part of the Royal Marines, generally, is a member of the Royal Marines Band Service. He plays a musical instrument and when serving on one of H.M. Ships also has a roll in First Aid and Damage Control, which deals with the watertight integrity of the ship. Then comes the Royal Marines Bugler. Who primarily takes his place within the Band as a Bugler or Drummer [but not both at the same time] or he can serve either in a Barracks, with a Commando unit, or on a ship without the presence of a band where he will just carry out bugling duties and other duties as required by his superiors.

As you can see there are, or should I say, were, three different types of enlistment. I say were, as only quite recently I was informed that the Buglers branch is now a part of the Royal Marines Band Service. Well there you are, a short, potted history of the make-up of the Royal Marines.

As my service number was the lowest of our class, I had the honorable position of 'senior boy'. We, the class of five, had our own instructor. A Corporal Bugler by the name of Bailey. Cpl. Bailey was known as most servicemen are known by a nickname. Being called Bailey he was known as 'Butch'.

Of course, we, the lowest of the low could only stand to attention when addressing him and call him Corporal.

Perhaps it would be useful if I explained the structure of the 'Band and Drums Company of which we formed a part.

Lowest of the low were the most recently enlisted Boy Buglers, who of course formed the junior class. Next came the other classes under training. Then there were the Boy Buglers who had passed for Duty, then the adult [men buglers] who were looked upon as 'old soldiers', then came the Non Commissioned Officers. [NCOs] Starting with lowest in rank and ascending we had the Lance Corporal, Corporal, Sergeant and the [lesser god] a senior Sergeant who held the appointment of Bugle Major. There was then the Drum Major the next [god] in line who was the person responsible for the discipline of all the non commissioned personnel within the Band and Drums. He was also the person in charge of the Band and Drums whilst on Parade. [You must have seen one, the chap who marches in front of the Band waving a big stick and who gives all the verbal orders].

In bygone days Drum Majors were not selected from the Buglers Branch but from one of the various branches of the Corps. In these modern times all Drum Majors are selected from the Buglers Branch, which in turn adds to the promotion structure within the Branch.

Each class had its own instructor and in those far off days it was pure chance whether you had a good instructor or a not so good instructor. It would appear that not all instructors knew very much about music, or in some cases nothing at all and the Bugle and Drum were taught 'parrot fashion'. In other words the instructor would play a Bugle call or beat a Drum part and the trainee would have to copy. Of course, each instructor had his own idea of how certain Bugle Calls should be played and there was a lot of poetic license in those days. The trouble came of course when two or more classes joined together and tried to play in unison. But being quite versatile, common ground was soon found and some sort of order was maintained. The main object of the training was to learn all the Bugle Calls which were used both ashore in barracks or on ships and naval establishments. These numbered some seventy one and some of these could be augmented by playing 'G's' before or after the actual call thus changing its meaning.

On the drumming side it was one continual learning process. For the initial training one had to learn the 'Open to Close Roll' which started off by single taps on each stick, gradually getting faster and faster until a 'close roll' was attained. There were also standard beating and of course, the Regimental Quick and Slow marches.

Remember, that all bugling and drumming, whether performed as an individual or with the band was done from memory, unlike the musicians who have their music in front of them on a 'march card'.

Discipline was very, and I do mean very strict in those days and Boy Buglers were not allowed to even speak to an adult Royal Marine. To leave the block [the building in which your room was situated] one had to get permission from an NCO.

The Band and Drums block in Stonehouse Barracks consisted of four floors, including the basement.

The basement housed the Barbers Shop amongst other things. Next came the NAAFI shop. This was strictly 'Out of Bounds' to Boy Buglers unless permission had been granted by an NCO. Then it was a case of making your purchase and immediately taking it up to your barrack room.

On the next floor the living-in members of the band had a barrack room and the wash hand basins and toilets [both of them] were situated, and most important, that was where our dining room was situated.

The Drum Major's quarters, where he lived with his wife and teenage daughter, were also situated on that floor.

The top floor held two barrack rooms which housed the Buglers, One for the adult Buglers and one for the Boy Buglers. There was also the Company Office where the Drum Major carried out his Sergeant Majors duties. Then of course was the Recreation Room which housed a full size snooker table. Which I believe at the time when I served as a Boy Bugler was the only one in the barracks except for one in the Officer's Mess.

A full size snooker table in the Band and Drums Company sounds very good but I have NEVER seen it being used by a Bugler. It seemed to have been there for the sole use of the Drum Major and the rest of the Bugle NCOs.

Training was carried out either in a barrack room or at an outside area close to the sea known as 'Devil's Point'. This is the official name of the location and is situated at the closest point of land opposite Drake's Island .

When we were required to practice at 'The Point' we were required to march about a mile to get there.

I mention this as our route took us up a very steep hill before descending to our practice area. It was usual for all classes to form one unit and march under the orders of the Duty NCO. A nasty trick played on us was for the Duty NCO, when we started to climb this hill was to give the order, "Break into double time, double march". This of course meant we were 'running'. As we reached the top of the hill he would give the order, "About Turn". So we would then be running down the hill in the direction we had just come from. This was repeated whilst all the Instructors 'walked' up the hill. So, by the time we eventually reached our practice area we were all well and truly 'Knackered'.

This was some source of fun to the Instructors but not so funny for us poor trainees who were carrying drums.

On returning to Barracks one day after this lousy trick had been played on us we held a little meeting, unknown to the Instructors, and decided that this was not part of our training.

Being the senior boy of the senior class under training, I was voted the person to complain. To do this officially I was required to write a 'chit' [a piece of paper] stating, PLYX5097 Boy Bugler Rickards, respectfully requests to see the Adjutant, through the Drum Major to 'State a complaint'. Of course, in those far off days this form of action was unheard of, still, I duly wrote the chit and before going to bed pinned it on hook outside the Company Office.

The next morning the company echoed with one of the NCOs shouting "RICKARDS!!!" Which of course meant...someone wanted me.

I was duly marched into the office where the Drum Major [Lesser God] was sat behind his desk. "What's all this about RICKARDS", The Drum Major wanted to know, waving my chit in the air, "Please Drum Major I want to see the Adjutant to state a complaint". So I had taken the first step. I then had to explain that I did not think it was part of my training to be doubled up and down the hill while the instructors walked up. [I had to say 'I' as I had written the chit and I could only speak for myself as I had been told if I mentioned anyone else, would be classed as a mutiny] I think I was the first Boy Bugler to EVER complain about anything by writing a chit. and it seemed to upset a few people.

Anyway, the Drum Major said he would investigate the matter. With that said, The NCO who had marched me into the office Yelled, Rickards, about turn, quick march, and I was out of the office and that was the last I heard about that.

Strange to say, we were NEVER doubled up and down the hill again.

After some time our Instructor, 'Butch' Bailey left us as he played the 'bagpipes' and his services were required on HMS Vanguard for the Royal Tour of South Africa. Our new Instructor was a Cpl Cole, his nickname was 'Whacker', why I never found out but he was a different sort of person to our former instructor and our training progressed.

Although I didn't intend to spend too much time writing about my training, strange things that come to mind have to be told. Let it just be said that I 'Passed Out' as a Duty bugler and was allowed to perform bugling duties within the Barracks.

In those days the barrack routine was run by Bugle Calls. Starting with Reveille at six o'clock in the morning and finishing at ten o'clock at night with Last Post.

Before actually being allowed to take over as 'Bugler of the Guard' we were required to do a supernumerary duty which meant accompanying the true Bugler of the Guard to learn the routine and to sound off all the bugle calls together. This was a 24 hour tour of duty. Being members of the guard we had to be included in the Guard Commander's 'Guard Report'. This report contained, amongst other things the names of all personnel on duty.

The first supernumerary which I did was with Bugler called, Rickard. Yes! As strange as it might seem, but it is the truth. One snag with being on duty with Ernie Rickard was the fact that he stuttered. So when we marched our fifteen paces from under the main gate arch onto the parade ground I had to give all the orders. Halt, Bugles Ready and Sound Off. This worked very well but

when it came time to give our names to the Guard Commander for his report that was when the trouble started. I had given my name as Rickards and then it was Ernie's turn so he said, quite naturally, Rickard. Of course, the Guard Commander thought he was messing around and repeated his question. By this time poor old Ernie was flustered and all he could get out was, Anda, Anda, Anda, Anda I am called Rickard. It took some time, but the Guard Commander eventually sorted it out. Poor old Tex Rickard [yes! Tex is the nickname for anyone called Rickard or Rickards] But Ernie's nickname from then on became 'Anda' Rickard.

When we were proficient enough we were allowed to march with the band and that was something of a wondrous thing. Having to learn the drum parts of the all the marches that were required, and learning to keep straight lines.

That was only part of it but enough to say that it was very exciting marching around as part of the Royal Marines Band and being sure that everyone was looking just at you, and you alone. It took some getting used to but in time it was possible to march with your head facing the front, playing the correct drum part and also being able to glance from side to side, without moving your head, to see what was going on around you.

One of the regular routes we took in those days was around the Stonehouse area. The band would form up in the drill shed and we would then march out of the barracks by one gate known as the Sea Gate, into the public roads around the barracks and then enter the barracks through the Main Entrance before being dismissed.

The very first 'outside public performance' I took part in with the band in Plymouth was marching from Plymouth railway station to Plymouth Argyle football ground, with the Plymouth Argyle football team following in an open top bus. The occasion was when the team was promoted to the 2nd division. It would take some researching to pinpoint when that was, but it was sometime in 1952.

I also remember playing in the band at the Argyle football ground in 1952 and that was the first and last time I watched Plymouth Argyle play. I know that this is advancing in time a little, but as I originally thought that this engagement took place just after I completed my training, but having found out I was wrong, this is the best, and easiest way to correct the dates.

One thing I will never forget is a visit to the dentist whilst I was under training. The dental surgery was situated on the upper floor of the 'sick quarters', at the end of Durnford Street, a few hundred yards away from the barracks. There was a very large window in the surgery that overlooked the River Hamoze where the Naval Dockyard could quite easily be seen together with several warships that were for ever coming and going. On the day in question I was in for a 'filling' and the dentist, one Royal Naval Dental Commander, by the name of 'Butcher', Yes! Honest, decided that I didn't need any form of anaesthetic and proceeded to drill away at my tooth, whilst at the same time, looking out the window and telling me all about the ships movements on the river. I can't remember visiting the dentist again while I was under training.

Before pressing on, just a couple of more things I remember which happened during my initial training.

As I have said, life certainly changed on joining the Royal Marines. There were rules and regulations for just about anything and everything.

First and foremost you were still a citizen of the UK but, you were also governed by Kings Regulations and the Army Act. This laid down the code by which you lead your daily life and it also stated the punishment that you could expect if you strayed from the straight and narrow, [if you got caught].

When serving under the 'White Ensign' whether it be aboard a ship or at a naval establishment you would be subject to the 'Naval Discipline Act'. Wherever you served there would be a notice containing 'Barrack or Ships Standing Orders. These were in addition to the overall rules and regulations.

Well, as I have said earlier, before I enlisted I managed to do quite well swimming, and a month or so after I entered the service I received an invitation to a dance that was being held where there would be prize giving and I had a few prizes to collect.

This was being held on a Monday evening and as I had read the Standing Orders, concerning the

Band and Drums Company, which stated, "Boy Buglers under training may absent themselves, from after training until 2000hrs [eight o'clock] on weekdays and until 2130hrs [nine thirty] on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays if not required for duty, so, I thought I would attend the Dance.

Every day except Sundays we were required to lay out various items of kit on our beds which would be inspected to ensure that all kit was kept in a clean and useable condition. In addition to this, every evening after working hours we had to present ourselves to the Duty NCO with the items required for the following day. This usually consisted of a Bugle [spotlessly cleaned], together with Drum Sling and web waist belt. When this was passed as clean, the rest of the evening could be spent as 'free time'.

On the evening of the dance I cleaned all my gear and had it inspected early. It was all passed so I then had a good wash [we were marched to the 'bathhouse' every Saturday for a bath and to do our washing.] There were no showers in those days. I then changed into my uniform for going ashore.

When I reported to the Duty NCO and asked permission to carry on ashore he simply told me I was not allowed ashore on a Monday evening. When I stood my ground [which was quite unusual in those days] and told him it stated on Standing Orders that I was allowed ashore, he just said, "Show me". So together we went out onto the landing where the orders were displayed and I pointed out the relevant order. He admitted that he had never realized that the order existed and told me to stay where I was. He then dashed down two flights of stairs and shortly returned with the Drum Major. He must have explained what had happened as the Drum Major read the order and told me to go into the Company Office. All business was conducted in the office.

Sat behind his desk the Drum Major asked me why I wanted to go ashore and when I told him about the dance and the prize giving and showed him my invitation, he told me to carry on ashore and that he had extended my leave that evening until 2300hrs [eleven o'clock]

That was the one and only time a Boy Bugler managed to slip ashore except on a Wednesday, Saturday or Sunday, whilst I was in barracks.

That is not strictly true, as there was a way to get ashore on a Monday evening and that was to go to the 'Chaplain's Hour'. Even that was not true, as 'Chaplain's Hour' meant marching over to the main gate to meet the Chaplain, who would then take us a couple hundred yards up the road, outside the barracks to the local Youth Club. He would then remind us that we all had to be back in the Band and Drums Block by 21.30 [nine thirty.]

Of course, once he was out of sight, Boy Buglers would be dashing off in all directions, doing what Boy Buglers do.

This was a good way to get out of barracks, and either our NCOs did not know what was happening, or they turned a 'blind eye', but it worked all the time I was under training.

Part of our training was physical exercise and we spent regular periods in the 'Gym'.

It was compulsory for everyone at one time to put on boxing gloves and 'have a go'. The PTI would pair us up and we were required to knock 'seven bells' out of each other until he blew his whistle. I have never professed to be a fighter, but I know it is better to hit, than to be hit, so when it was my turn I just went 'mad' until the whistle was blown.

I was then 'volunteered' to form part of the Buglers boxing team, in preparation for a visit to Kelly's Collage, which is a private collage at Tavistock, some 15 or so miles from Plymouth.

We were told it was all to be on a friendly basis, and that there would be 'big eats' after the fights. So we trained, [not really knowing what we were doing], and our PTI took us training a couple of times a week during our regular visits to the Gym.

On the day fixed for our encounter we were driven in a coach to the collage and proceeded to get changed.

To be honest, I don't remember much about the fight I had, as it seemed to me that just after the bell went to start my first round, I was hit a couple of times, and the next thing I remember was coming to, and being helped to the dressing room.

We did have 'big eats' and although it was something special in those days, that was the last time I ever took part in any boxing team.

We found out from our opponents at the collage that our PTI used to travel to Tavistock and train their boxers everyday. I guess we never stood a chance.

Another time I proved to be a bit of a rebel was when I put in another 'chit to state a complaint'. On the day concerned we had to lay out all the outer clothing we had been issued with, except what we were wearing. This was to ensure that everything was in good condition. Well along with the remainder of my class everything was laid out and we proceeded to the Gym. On our return I discovered every button from every item I had laid out had been cut off and now formed a neat pile on my bed.

When I asked our instructor why this had been done I was told that he had found a loose button and as a punishment I could sew the lot on again.

I then wrote out my 'chit' and took it to the Company Office, knocked on the door and was told to enter.

I marched in and gave the chit to the Drum Major. He wasn't very happy and asked me what it was all about. When I explained what had happened and said that I didn't consider anyone had the right to cut my buttons off as it was not laid down as any form of punishment and I wanted to see the Adjutant. I was then told that my instructor was a good instructor and he was only looking after my interests and that he had a wife etc., etc. Once again I was marched from the office having been told to carry on to practice and that the matter would be investigated. So I did go to practice and when I returned, 'The Magic Fairy' had been busy at work and all my buttons had been sewed on, and that was the last I heard of it. It appeared that no one ever saw the Adjutant to state a complaint.

During the latter part of my training someone gave me a bike. I think it must have been one of the older Buglers who was going on draft.

Anyway this bike had a puncture and I was allowed to go to the Drill Shed where it was kept, to mend it. This happened on a Sunday after church.

The only snag now was that I didn't have a pump in barracks, but I knew my brother had one at home. So having had my gear inspected for the following day I was allowed ashore. That would give me time to go home, collect the pump and get back to barracks in time for tea.

I must explain, in those days we did not have a central dining room in barracks as each company had its own dining room in its respective block. One of the older Buglers was appointed 'Dining Hall Attendant' and would collect all the meals from the galley [kitchen] in a special wheeled container and would serve all meals in our own dining room.

As a special treat in those days we used to have real fruit cake and real butter on a Sunday. I know it means very little or nothing nowadays but in the 1940's, just after the World War Two It really did mean something.

So I did return to barracks in time for tea and then I changed into working dress and reported to the Duty NCO for permission to go to the Drill Shed.

[He was the same NCO who was on duty the evening I went ashore for my prize giving]. He reminded me that he had found a dirty mark on my Bugle when it was inspected and therefore wanted to see it again. This I duly did and this time there was no dirty mark. I then asked once again if I might go to the Drill Shed and told him why I wanted to go. He then reminded me that I was senior boy of my room and as it was a disgrace, I had better get it cleaned. I could see what was happening so, together with the boys who had not gone ashore we gave the room a good clean. I reported once again and this time I was told to bring all the gear I had to lay out the following morning for his inspection. I knew this was never done so I returned to my room. It had not just been the case of reporting to him and receiving immediate attention as he was playing snooker and he would only see me to speak to when he was ready. The time had got later and later and it was now nearing 2130hrs [nine thirty] when all Boy Buglers, not returning from shore had to be in bed. So I went to the wash place, had my wash, went and found the largest piece of paper I could find; and wrote a 'chit' with the usual request on it and pinned it outside the office on the hook provided.

It wasn't long before 'RICKARDS' was shouted for, so I went to the landing to find the Duty NCO with my chit in his hand wanting to know what this was all about. I respectfully told him that he had deliberately stopped me from going to the Drill Shed in my free time to do a simple job and

that I considered I was being victimized.

He tried to flannel me over saying that as a Boy Bugler he had to look after my interests and that I knew I was not allowed to talk to Marines etc., and he only had my interest at heart. I asked him if it was in my interest that I had been told to clean up my room and that he had wanted to inspect the gear that I was due to lay out the following morning. Things that no one had done in the past. I wondered if the Drum Major or the Adjutant would think it was in my interest.

With that he told me to go to the Drill Shed and do what I had to do. I told him it was too late now as it was just about nine thirty. He then told me he was giving me a Direct Order to go to the drill shed.

Even I knew enough to know that you did not ever refuse a 'Direct Order', so I took myself off to the drill shed and inflated the tyre and returned to the block, brushed passed the Duty NCO on the landing and he asked, "Where are you going". I told I was going to take the chit down before I went to bed and he replied "I have already done that".

I don't suppose I was the 'flavor of the month' to him, but I wasn't going to be sat on.

After I had 'Passed for Duty' it was usual, together with some of the other Buglers, to go ashore and attend 'Sunday Pictures' in Plymouth.

There was usually quite crowd of us and, as was the practice, this is where we 'chatted up' the girls.

I got to know one of the girls quite well and we started going out together. This was Bernice, she was one of three sisters and she also had a younger brother, and it seemed that there were only very few occasions when just the two of us managed to go out on our own. Still, our friendship blossomed and I eventually was taken home to meet mum and dad.



Whilst under training we had to make our own enjoyment and although the things we got up to now seem quite silly, but at the time it was a means of breaking the routine of a hard training programme.

The barrack room we lived in was on the top floor of the building and our windows looked out onto an area known as 'north rear'. We were about 80/90 feet above the ground and one of the 'capers' we used to get up to was to get one of the junior class and stow him into a kitbag. The kitbag was then attached to a drum rope which was several yards long and then the kitbag, was levered out of the window, and with three or four of us holding the rope, the kitbag was then lowered as far as possible outside. Of course, it was not a steady lowering, and if the rope had slipped at anytime, the result could have been serious, if not fatal.

One of the most serious crimes in the service is to interfere with another person's mail.

There was one occasion when, on returning to barracks after being ashore, one of the class discovered that cakes, which had been sent to him in a parcel from home, were missing. After a search, crumbs were discovered in the bedding of someone in the room. The culprit was then manhandled into a kitbag, and lowered out of the window of the barrack room. Hanging some 40/50 feet above the ground he was left there for a few hours, and only returned to the room when it was time for the duty NCO to check the room before 'Lights Out'. There were no further problems with anyone's mail.

All Boy Buglers had to attend Church on Sundays and this meant getting dressed in our best uniform, being inspected by the Duty NCO and then being marched across the parade ground to the 'Clock Tower' just inside the main gate, where the church was situated.

The organ in the church was activated by means of bellows. These were usually worked by a Boy Bugler who was required to 'pump' a handle continually whilst the organ was required. Sometimes there would be a lapse at the beginning of a hymn as the 'organ pumper' would be otherwise engaged carving his initials on the woodwork. There were carvings going back for many years and I expect they still exist to this day.

It wasn't very long before we realized that if one was 'confirmed', church consisted of a very short service early on a Sunday morning, instead of an hour. So, the confirmation classes were always full with Boy Buglers, once they had discovered that 'early church' was best. After being 'confirmed' I was given a New Testament which I still have, but I must admit, it isn't used much nowadays.

Oh Yes! The Bugle Major whilst I was under training was a man called Baker. A very short and quiet person and the things I remember about him was, that he was never to be seen when we were at practice and I can't even remember ever hearing him play a bugle or picking up a pair of drumsticks.

I presume he could play both but I guess I will never know. Another thing I remember was he had a very bad habit of giving one of us an enamel mug and a pound note and sending off downstairs to the NAAFI for a mug of tea. In those days a mug of tea cost one penny, [at 240 pence to the pound] Even a Boy Bugler didn't have the nerve to ask for a pennyworth of tea and give a pound note so the Bugle Major usually had a mug of tea paid for by a Boy Bugler. However, it was said that by the time the Bugle Major actually received his tea there was sometimes an added ingredient. [spitttt!] and other unmentionables.

As time went by, the message got around, and even the Musicians who lived in barracks would not ask Boy Buglers to go to the NAAFI for mugs of tea.

As you can see by the photo, the motto of the Royal Marines is PER MARE PER TERRAM.

Translated this is, BY SEA BY LAND. In addition to this, to some members of the Buglers Branch it was also known as, PER MARE PER TERRAM PER ASBESTOS.



[Blow you Jack! I'm Fireproof.]

CHAPTER TWO

MY FIRST DRAFT

Having 'passed for duty' I was now available to be sent on 'draft' [sent to a ship, barracks or Naval establishment] and it was not long before my name came up.

I was to go to the Infantry Training Centre, Royal Marines [ITCRM] at Lympstone, Devon, which is situated four miles from Exmouth and six miles from Exeter.

Prior to actually departing barracks one has to do a 'leaving routine'. This includes laying out every item of kit that has been issued to ensure that nothing is missing and that everything is in a good state of repair.

It also informs all the departments that you will be leaving the barracks, in order that all documents referring to you are sent to your new unit.

The route to my new unit was road transport to the Plymouth rail station then on to Exeter where I had to change trains to finally arrive at Exton station the nearest station to the ITCRM. It was then a short journey by road to the camp itself.

In those days, as it is today, all items of kit went with you and for a Bugler that consisted of two kit bags and a drum. To make things a little difficult it was not just the case of humping that lot around but all webbing equipment, which was blanched had to be assembled and worn as a 'marching order'. This meant that you traveled with a large pack on your back, a small pack on one side, a water bottle on the other and an entrenching tool bouncing around on your backside. Then your bugle was worn over your shoulder and laid on the right side of your body.

It was no fun lugging all that around. Of course, you were inspected by the Duty Officer before you left barracks and you could expect the same treatment on your arrival at your new unit.

A standing joke in the Buglers branch at that time was of the poor Bugler struggling across the

parade ground with all the kit he could carry when he was stopped in his tracks by the Regimental Sergeant Major yelling, "And where do you think you're going Bugler". To which the Bugler replied, "China Sir", to which the RSM replied, "Well double". [run]

So on the 2nd September 1947 having spent just over a year in Stonehouse Barracks, Plymouth, I left for my first draft.

As it is not very comfortable trying to sit down wearing a marching order, so it came off as soon as we cleared the barrack gates. It then became yet another item to be carried when moving from one form of transport to another.

On the last stage of the train travel I struggled, with the help of one of the other passengers in my compartment, to get into my 'marching order, so although the final phase of the journey to the ITCRM was uncomfortable, I made it.

On arrival, I reported to the Guardroom where I was greeted by the Guard Commander, who said something like, "So you're the new bugler, well 'sticks' take all that garbage off your back and I'll send the guard orderly down to your hut to get someone to help you with your kit".

"What about my inspection by the Orderly Officer", I asked.

"Oh he doesn't want to see you, and while you're waiting come in and have a cup of tea".

Well! Life had suddenly taken a turn for the better and I thought, I'm going to like it here. Needless to say I was soon settled-in to a completely different way of life.

It didn't take very long to realize that having completed my training, and being away from the very strict and sometimes stupid discipline of Plymouth Barracks, that this was the real sort of service life, and although it was always possible to meet an idiot or two where ever you served, on the whole there was a certain feeling of friendship, and any rivalry always seem to work out as a friendly sort of rivalry as opposed to anything you could class as nasty.

I was part of a team. It consisted of a Corporal Bugler, five other buglers and a small Royal Naval School of Music Band. What sort of Band you might ask? Well let me explain.

In Storehouse the band was a 'Group Band' and consisted of about fifty musicians.

It was only on very rare occasions that they were ever required to move out of their own area.

Chatham and Portsmouth also had their 'Group Bands' and these bands were also permanently stationed in their respective barracks. They all wore their own distinctive cap badges, as they do today, which was in commemoration of some historic event in years gone by when they were known as Divisional Bands. As part of the old three Royal Marines divisions of Chatham, Plymouth and Portsmouth.

The Band at the ITCRM was a different thing altogether. At that time they were trained at their School of Music in Burford and were dispatched as smaller bands to the various HM Ships and Establishments. They even wore a different collar badge on their tunics which consisted of a small lyre as opposed to the Globe and Laurel worn by the Group bands and the remainder of the Royal Marines.



Me relaxing at ITC RM 1947.

In later years the RNSM became a part of the Royal Marines and became the Royal Marines School of Music, and although two of the Group Bands, still retain their distinctive cap badges, any replacement musicians required in the Group Bands were acquired from the RMSM and not local enlistment as used to be the case.

The main duties of the Buglers at the ITCRM was to provide a Duty Bugler and to perform with the band. Gone was the very strict discipline of Stonehouse and at last you were once again part of the human race. There was still discipline but it included common sense and that made a world of difference. It was the first time I had encountered buglers from a different Group, and although some were from Plymouth there were some from Chatham and Portsmouth. We had always been told, whilst under training that buglers from the other

Groups were a load of rubbish, but that was unfounded and as with most things in life there were good and bad, or should I say, good and not so good. Anyway we all got on together really well.

One of the buglers had what I can best describe as an elongated head. It sort of 'stuck out' at the back and to combat this he always wore his hair longer than he should have done. In those days there was only one accepted haircut and that was a 'short back and sides'. Musicians were allowed to wear their hair longer as they were required to play in the Officers Mess and at other indoor functions where caps were not worn. Anyway this bugler was going out with one of the NAAFI girls who lived in Exmouth. She used to walk to the nearest railway station to catch the train home after the NAAFI closed. Well, as the last train left long after the last bugle call was sounded for the day, when this bugler was on duty he used to ask the Guard Commander if he could walk his girlfriend to the station. As this was a fairly regular occurrence it was taken for granted that that was the normal routine and so it became, until the day a new Guard Commander was on duty

and he refused to allow 'sticks' to accompany his girl friend. Well, as there were no more bugle calls to be sounded off that day 'sticks' decided to accompany his girl friend anyway. The shock came when he returned to the camp, as he was immediately placed under close arrest for disobeying an order.

The next day he was marched to the barbers shop and, under supervision, was given, on the orders of the Regimental Police Sergeant, a 'real' short back and sides.

Of course, having this unusual shaped head he looked quite weird and for the next few months he wore a beret all the time. As he couldn't eat in the dining hall with a beret on, he used to take all his meals in the NAAFI, standing at the counter.

On occasions when this bugler was parading with the guard prior to taking over the duties of Bugler of the Guard he would wear his webbing belt 'upside down', so that when he was inspected, the officer inspecting [usually a 'young officer under training'] would immediately see that the belt was upside down and not notice the long hair.

There were some good times had at the ITCRM and all the buglers got on well together. The buglers always got on very well with the Royal Marine cooks and that meant we did very well where food was concerned. In those days just about everyone was short of money as we only used to be paid fortnightly, this meant there was a 'blank week' and cash was hard to find. What we used to do, together with the cooks, was to pool whatever money we had on blank weeks and then a limited number of cooks and buglers would go ashore into Exmouth. Of course, this didn't mean we had plenty to spend but we would catch a bus, right outside the camp into Exmouth, go to our favorite 'pub' and order up our pints of scrumpy, at about 4d a pint. [that's less than 2p] We used to have a good old session, then, having missed the last bus, we would then walk the four miles back to camp.

At one time our band was required to mass with another RNSM band in order to perform at an agricultural event. This event took place at a place called Brewood. I know it was somewhere 'up north' but as for its exact location, I just don't know.

Anyway, after some rehearsal to sort out a marching display we eventually arrived at the venue to discover that we were to live in 'bell tents', which were not very big but we had to manage eight to a tent. Of course, this was not funny when you consider that we all had our own instruments and to make things worse, it was raining. We were there for three days and the weather got worse as the days went by. The thought of all that white blanco running over uniforms and those brass shell drums still make me cringe. The band that had joined us for this engagement had a few 'characters' in it and they soon found their way to the beer tent. [At most agricultural shows some brewery or other has a tent where samples of their brew may be sampled free of charge.] Although they managed to stagger on for the band display, it was obvious that they were 'under the weather' and as they countermarched at the end of the arena a Senior NCO would pull them out of the band, and they took no further part in the display. One of these characters was well known for his 'pranks' and managed to avoid the senior NCO at the end of the arena and continued marching with the band with his white helmet worn 'back to front'. The final insult came on the last day of the show when an announcement was made to the effect, "Because of the bad state of the ground, the horses will not perform and the next event in the Arena will be a display of marching by the RM Band".

It was quite an experience being accommodated with the band at Lympstone, as up until that time it had been a case of all Boy Buglers in the same barrack room. Although some of the members of the band lived in married quarters in and around the Exmouth area, the remainder of us lived in a Nissan hut.

At that time most of the accommodation within the camp consisted of Nissan huts or wooden framed buildings.

The only substantial brick buildings were the ablution blocks, situated away from the huts, the camp church and the cinema.

Of course, that was in 1957 and things have certainly changed since then. The one time ITCRM is now the CTCRM. Commando Training Centre, and the place has been completely re-built. The old

Nissan Huts and wooden buildings have been replaced with modern buildings and the compliment now includes a large Royal Marines Band complete with a Corps of Drums and a Drum and Bugle Major. Not like the Cpl Bugler and five Buglers of my days there all those years ago.



Not under escort, Just Duty Bugler.

There were some very interesting members of the band. One musician in particular was Len Pankhurst. He was a pianist who used to go ashore and have his quota of 'Scrumpy' and then return to the camp and spend quite sometime in the cinema,[he had his own key] playing various piano concertos.

Although these performances usually took place late at night, he never seemed to upset anyone and it would appear that it was the accepted thing.

Another member of the band who was quite a character was a musician called Wyatt. I can't remember his first name, but he had a flower and vegetable garden just outside our hut. He was known as 'Dopey' Wyatt as he would take his trumpet and stand outside the hut and play to his flowers and vegetables everyday. He swore that his playing encouraged everything in his garden to grow. [who knows? He might have been right.] I have heard of a certain prince who is known have talked to flowers and the like.

Another thing I remember is that in that band we had five musicians with the name of Smith. Of course in order not to cause confusion, they were always referred to by their initials.

Once I left Lympstone, I only ever came across one of the 'Smiths' again. Strange, as it was usual to at least meet up with people you had served with previously at some time. The final character I will mention who also served at the ITC is a Band Cpl. by the name of Peake. He was about five foot two and was very clever arranging music. For a concert that was to be given within the camp he arranged the overture to William Tell, in 'Spike Jones' fashion. If you are too young to know who 'Spike Jones' was, you should 'look him up'.

One of my everlasting memories of the ITCRM was one weekend when I was not required for duty until the Sunday morning for a Church parade with the band. I decided to 'hitch hike' to see my parents. Early on the Friday afternoon I left camp and being lucky getting lifts, it was not long before I was in Plymouth enjoying the comfort of home and a little pocket money from my mum. This certainly helped to supplement my meager pay of 28 shillings a fortnight [which is one pound forty pence].

Come Saturday, armed with my train fare, extra pocket money and 'goodies' to eat on the way, I started my return journey to camp. This meant a train to Exeter, then changing to another station before catching another train as far as Exton Station, then a walk to camp. Anyway, having settled into a corner seat and heading for Exeter I soon dozed off. The next thing I remember was the train grinding to a halt and someone on the platform shouting "Taunton, Taunton". Knowing that Taunton was further on from Exeter I made a quick exit from the train. Having explained my predicament to the ticket collector on the platform he suggested that I caught the 'milk train' back to Exeter. The time was then about 10.45pm and the milk train was not due in until after midnight. By this time it had started raining so I just sat in a cold waiting room until the train arrived. Eventually I arrived in Exeter to find that there were no more trains to Exmouth until the morning. I then counted my cash to find I only had a pound. So I spoke to a taxi driver and asked how far he could take me for a pound. He said he would take me as far as Topsham, which was about two miles from camp. So off we started. By this time the rain was really heavy and we duly arrived at Topsham and the driver continued towards the camp. I reminded him that I only had a pound and he said something to the effect that he would take me to the camp as it was raining so hard and he doubted if he would get another 'fare' by the time he got back to Exeter.

Having returned to camp I managed a few hours sleep before getting up and going for a wash.[the washhouse and toilets were in a separate building] I then went to breakfast. On my return to the hut I saw that no one else had moved so I asked what time we had to be ready for the church parade. Oh! That was cancelled yesterday, came the reply.

I know what I am about to write will not mean much to anyone in particular but it was while I was at Lympstone that I received some advice on 'ironing'. I was attempting to iron a shirt, and not making a very good job of it when one of the Band Corporals took over and suggested I worked to a system. He showed me exactly what he meant, and I have used that system ever since.

In early June 1948, still a Boy Bugler, I was selected to join an augmented Band and Buglers from the three Groups to work-up for a Royal Tour on the battleship HMS Vanguard.

CHAPTER THREE

WORK-UP FOR THE ROYAL TOUR

It was in late June when I arrived at the Royal Marines barracks at Chatham. Having never been there before I found it quite strange. Living in a very large barrack room with several other

buglers, most of whom I had never met before.

There were two or three from Plymouth, and also a Corporal, my old instructor Cpl Cole from Plymouth and we all soon melded into a Corps of Drums. There were twelve of us that formed that team and for the next few months we were going to get to know each other quite well.

The idea was for us to form a 'Corps of Drums', learning the many and various marches we would be required to perform when we joined the augmented Band at Portsmouth before embarking on HMS Vanguard.

The Bugle Major at Chatham was a very quiet man, and once he had introduced himself and told us what was expected of us, he left the supervision of all our instruction to one of the NCOs who was part of our team. We practiced each day Monday to Friday and were soon learning to play as a team. The different teaching at the groups gave way to one that we could all adapt to, and we began to learn all the new marches required. As I have said earlier, we played both Bugle and Drum and it was at this point that the selection was made as to who would predominately play which part of a fanfare as a priority. I was pleased, to be selected to play the 1st part in all the fanfares which featured all the high notes. As the youngest Bugler of the team I felt it to be quite an honour.

As the weeks went by we got to know what was expected of us and made good progress.

During the weekends when not required for practice a few of us wandered ashore to give Chatham the once over but as I was still on boys pay there was not very much I could do ashore.

Just as a point of interest, Plymouth, Portsmouth and Chatham all have similar World War Two Naval Memorials and each are situated in very prominent positions in each of the cities.

After nearly a month of training in Chatham, the Corps of Drums then traveled to Portsmouth to join up with the band.

The band consisted of the pick of musicians from Plymouth and Chatham who augmented the Royal Yacht band from Portsmouth.

On our arrival at Portsmouth we continued practice on both Bugle and Drum.

It was usual to place two six foot tables end to end and sit around them on stools and practice drumming just using drumsticks and reading the parts from a book in front of us until such times as we had learnt the parts by memory.

Whilst at Portsmouth, the Royal Naval Diving Championships were held in the Royal Marines Barracks swimming pool.

As it was known that I had done some diving, I was urged by the Plymouth Buglers from the Corps of Drums to enter. So on the day of the competition I was supported by a large group of Buglers. As the competition progressed it was obvious that a certain Naval Petty Officer, Physical Training Instructor, who was the reigning Royal Naval Champion Diving Champion, was getting unwarranted support from the judges.

I say this as, before each dive, the dive had to be 'named', and the PO was naming a certain dive, and then performing something completely different.

Of course, his dives were very good but he was not diving in accordance to the rules.

At the close of the competition, the Petty Officer was given 1st place, another naval rating was given 2nd place and I was third.

There was 'one hell of a objection' from a crowd of RM Buglers, who accused the judges of a 'Fix'.

They had been keeping a record of all the points scored for each and every dive of the competition and they claimed that I had more points than the sailor who had been awarded 2nd place. They would not calm down until the judges agreed to do a 're-count' of the points.

It didn't change the 1st position, but it brought me into 2nd place. [Once again, I was not the 'flavour of the month' as far as the Royal Navy was concerned.]

One day when we were at practice, the barrack room door 'burst open' and the Bugle Major of Portsmouth strode in, placed a foot on one of the stools and stated in a very loud voice. "I am

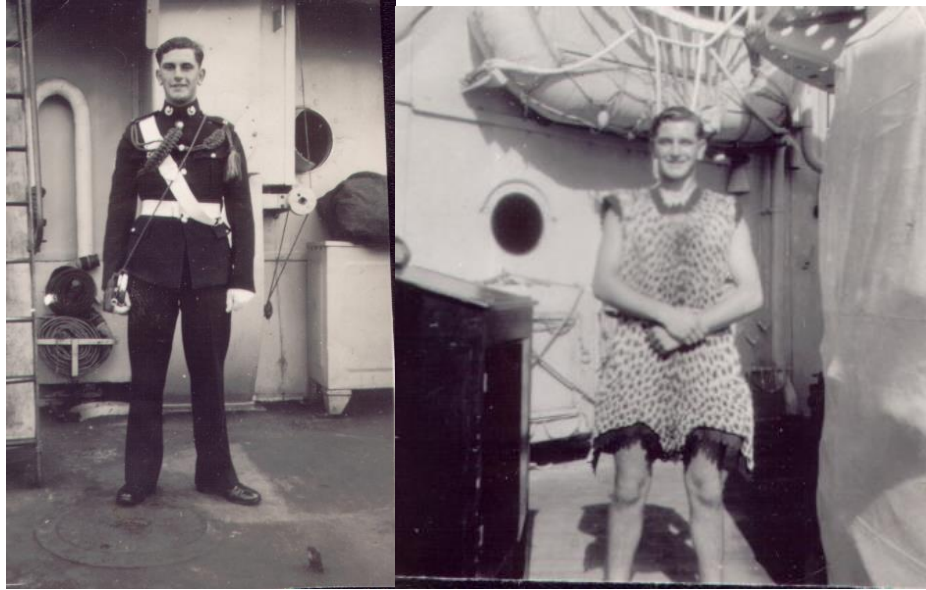
going to teach you one hundred marches". No one seemed to take very much notice of him so he then stormed out of the room and that was about the last we saw of him during our stay. It takes all sorts!

We eventually started practicing with the band in the band practice room where we were introduced to the Director of Music, the then, Major F. Vivian Dunn. Known to everyone [behind his back, as 'Fred'] and later we progressed to the parade ground where we learnt a display routine that could be used, when required.

Before leaving Portsmouth to join HMS Vanguard we were all assembled in the band practice room where we were addressed by the Commanding Officer of the barracks. Amongst other things, he stated that although it was unusual for the members of the Group Bands to travel far from their own areas, this forthcoming Royal Tour was a special occasion, but to rest assured that should there be any family problems whilst the band was away, no stone would be left unturned to get any member of the band back to his family. This statement was endorsed by the Director of Music.

Our next move was to join the Vanguard in Weymouth Bay. Traveling by train we arrived at Weymouth to be met by someone from the ship who escorted us to waiting motorboats that would convey us to the Vanguard which was anchored in the bay. On reaching the ship we were told that the Captain was carrying out 'rounds' and we were then told to follow our guide to our mess deck. It took us at least ten minutes to reach our mess deck and although I was on the ship for nearly three months I never did find out which route we had taken on that first day.

Alas! Britain no longer has any Battleships, and I consider myself very lucky to have served on the last remaining one. It is like many other things in life. It is really impossible to explain 'what it was like' to anyone who has no idea of the way of life on board a ship, especially now that things have changed so much in recent years. Enough to say for now that the Vanguard was like a big city. Self contained in many ways, able to produce its own drinking water, meals for approximately one thousand men, lighting and power to run this 'sea city' and travel at a top speed of about thirty four knots. The ship exercised various actions and one that I remember was the firing of a full 'broadside' from all 15inch guns. [15 inch was the actual inner diameter of gun barrels] I was the Duty Bugler on the bridge on this particular day and when the guns actually fired, the 'flashback' blew back as far as the bridge and it was a wonder that no one was actually burnt, as the heat was something no one had warned us about. That was the one and only broadside fired as the vibrations really shook the ship from bow to stern and it wasn't deemed necessary to fire the main armament again during that trip.



On board the Battleship HMS Vanguard 1948.

The work-up took us as far as Malta and it was while we were on our way there that we had a fatal accident on board. A sailor got caught in the moving part of one of the guns casemate and was crushed to death. His funeral was arranged to take place in Malta and he was given a full military funeral. The full Band and Drums took part, and on our return to the ship another tragedy was awaiting one of our Buglers. The ships Chaplain was on the gangway to pass the news that a signal had arrived to say that the bugler's mother was very ill and not expected to live. Arrangements were made for the bugler to see the Major Commanding the Royal Marines Detachment but he was not at all helpful and would not arrange for the bugler to return home. Forgotten was that promise of the Commanding Officer from Portsmouth. The bugler then saw Major Dunn but his only comment was that if the Detachment Commander hadn't arranged to fly the bugler home there was nothing he could do. Perhaps it was because he was a bugler and not a musician from a Group Band. Since that day I never liked 'Fred' although in later years I had to perform in bands where he was in charge.

When we eventually arrived back in England it was too late for the Bugler to see his mother before she died and to add insult to injury the buglers brother, who had been serving in the Far East had been flown home in time to see his mother.

Of course, this being my first draft to a ship there were so many interesting things to see and hear.

During my initial training I had learnt all the Sea Calls and now I was actually required to play them. Forming part of the Gangway Staff when Duty Bugler in harbour and being stationed on the bridge when on duty at sea was something that would be very difficult to explain to anyone without service experience.

Having heard of 'The Gut' that was one place that had to be visited.

'The Gut' is a very long narrow cobbled street running from about sea level up to a high point in Valletta with 'Bars' situated on both sides just about all the way up. In those bygone days a visit was a 'must' for just about anyone from one of HM Ships, and in those days there were lots of Royal Naval Ships around. Different ships companies used to frequent their own bars and tales would go around about certain females who were regulars at the different bars.

As I was still only receiving 'boys pay' there was not a lot I could buy, but the experience of 'going shore in a foreign port' was exciting just by itself.

Before actually visiting Malta I was told that it was usual to drink beer when ashore as Malta was situated on a pinnacle and that all the water available on the island was tainted with salt. This I found to be true, although it didn't mean that I had the resources to drink much beer.

In later years I discovered that it was the usual practice for HM Ships visiting Malta to produce and supply bread and water to the Royal Naval shore establishments and other government bodies on the island.

Whilst on the work-up cruise we called into Gibraltar and it was there that I was first introduced to 'bargaining'. I was told before I went ashore never to accept the price asked in any of the souvenir shops but to bargain as much as possible and remember that whatever you eventually paid, the shopkeeper would still be making a profit. I know that who ever it was I went ashore with, done my bargaining for me. This included bargaining for an embroidered tablecloth I wanted to buy for my mother and some cushion covers. I got so afraid that the purchase would not be made that I agreed at a price that had been reached and was quite happy. After the sale I was told I should have kept quiet as the bargaining was not really finished but I just couldn't keep my big mouth shut. [A lifetime problem]

During that visit to Gibraltar the main attraction were the world famous 'rock apes', but at the age of seventeen I was not very interested. The main street held more interest for me as I had never seen so many souvenir shops and as most things were still in very short supply back home it was so interesting just 'window shopping'.

One other thing I bought in Gibraltar was a wrist watch. I remember it cost me a pound, and in those days that was a lot of money to me.

When the Vanguard was scrapped, two of her 15inch guns were placed in front of the Imperial War Museum in London, as can be seen below.



All our efforts for the forthcoming Royal Tour were to no avail as, King George VI became very ill and the intended tour was cancelled.

From the Vanguard I went back to the RM Barracks at Eastney, Portsmouth, and from there we all dispersed to our respective units, with me returning to Stonehouse Plymouth.

CHAPTER FOUR

H.M.S.JAMAICA

On my return to the barracks at Plymouth I was greeted with the news that I would be going on draft the following week to HMS Jamaica. The Jamaica was a ten thousand ton Colony Class cruiser that was due to start a two and a half year commission on the American and West Indies Station.

I immediately started a joining and leaving routine at the same time. As I was going on draft so quickly I was not required for regular practice and I spent all my time, when I was not completing my joining/leaving routine, in the Company office cutting out and sticking in the amendments to Kings Regulations and Admiralty instructions. I found this very interesting as they contained the rules and regulations which we lived whilst in HM Service. As I was still seeing Bernice from time to time I suggested that we could keep in touch while I was away and we agreed to write to each other.

On the 14th January 1948 I joined HMS Jamaica in the Royal Dockyard at Devonport.

It was my first visit to a Naval Dockyard and it was nothing like I had expected. There was so many 'bits and pieces' laying around that the whole place looked as if it could do with a good 'clean up'. Anyway I arrived on board to be welcomed by my 'opposite number' who was 'Freddie Ford'. He was in a class who joined a little later than me and this was his first draft. I remembered him quite well as he had a brother who was a Corporal Bugler who, had caught Freddie smoking in the toilet and had reported him. Yes! We had that sort of discipline in those days.

Anyway I was helped onboard and once again I found things to be a lot easier than life in barracks. When Freddie informed me that he had midnight leave every night, I was quite surprised as I didn't expect leave to be granted that late, while still serving on board a ship as a Boy Bugler. After I had got my kit on board I had to report to the Royal Marines Office where I met the Sergeant Major of the Royal Marines Detachment. He went through the usual routine of questioning and then asked if there was anything I wanted to know. I asked what leave I would be getting and he then asked me what 'embarkation leave' I had received. When I told him I had not had any, he said I would be sent on leave the following day and that I would return to the ship the day before she sailed.

When I told him that I really wanted to know was what evening leave I could expect, he told me that I could have midnight leave. Well, I went on leave the following day and rejoined the ship the day before she sailed.

On the day we left Plymouth I fell in with the band and we played several marches as we sailed out of the dockyard area and into Plymouth Sound and then out to the open sea.

After we passed the breakwater we were dismissed and then started the routine of getting used to the ship. Getting to know the Royal Marines Detachment and the Band.

Having entered the open sea it was if someone had come along with a JCB and dug holes over the place. This was my first taste of a 'Drop of roughers'. I am glad to say that it had no ill effect on me. I remember being shown around the ship by Freddie and we eventually came to the Hanger. This was originally used to house a seaplane, but after the war, Jamaica no longer carried an aircraft and it was now used as the ships cinema. This was a large internal, steel decked area where stacking chairs would be laid out for a cinema performance but during the day, the chairs would be stacked and stowed away.

Because of the rough seas the chairs were 'lashed down' to prevent them sliding all over the deck. They were lashed down on that day but Freddie managed to free two of them and we had a good time sliding around with the roll of the ship.

It was usual when at sea for 'Evening Quarters' to be held. [this meant that everyone on the ship

not actually on duty would muster in their respective part of ship to ensure everyone was accounted for. [This was to check that no one had fallen overboard or had been locked in a compartment] On our first day at sea I remember parading with the Detachment and standing next to a Marine who had been sea sick all day and had only just managed to drag himself to Evening Quarters. He was in one hell of a state. His uniform was crumpled and covered with his vomit and it looked as if he would die any moment. To make matters worse, having just left barracks, I was 'barrack clean' with spit and polished boots and looked quite smart. Poor old Jack Laker! He did get over it and he didn't die on us.

Our first port of call on leaving Plymouth was Bermuda. At the tender age of seventeen I didn't know much about foreign countries although I had heard that Bermuda was a beautiful place. When entering or leaving harbour it was usual for the ships buglers to either parade with the band or take position on the highest platform on the ship, there we would sound off whatever calls required.

Entering Bermuda was a really wonderful experience. Bermuda consists of a mass of islands and to have the view that we had as buglers was something to remember.

The houses built on the numerous islands were all painted in pastel colours and many of the houses had their own swimming pools and their private jetties.

In addition to the two Royal Marines Buglers on the Jamaica we were also lucky enough to have a seaman bugler on board. Although he was not a full time bugler he carried out quite a few bugling duties. It just happened to be Freddie's birthday the day we arrived in Bermuda and as luck would have it, the seaman bugler took over his duty as soon as we secured alongside. So, Freddie and I went ashore to celebrate.

Please remember, we were still Boy Buglers in the eyes of the service and our pay was next to nothing. We just didn't realize how expensive things were in Bermuda and we ended up celebrating Freddy's birthday with a bottle of Coca Cola between us.

Talking about money, or at least the lack of it, reminds me of my first payday on the Jamaica. I was paid the princely sum of five shillings, which in present day money works out at twenty five pence. I went to the pay office immediately pay parade was over and complained to the pay office Petty Officer, who told me that five shillings was all I was entitled to as a Boy and the rest of my pay would be saved for me until the end of the quarter. Well, if you remember, I said I spent some time in barracks before joining the Jamaica amending Kings Regulations etc., well whilst employed doing that I came across a regulation stating, "As all members of the Royal Marines are, 'Sworn Men', they shall be paid their wages in full". This included Boy Buglers.[or words to that effect.]So when I informed the Petty Officer of this he got a bit 'shirty' and wanted to know who I thought I was quoting regulations to him. He was a nice chap really and I suggested we had a look at the regulations together, which we did, and from then on, Freddie and I received our full pay each payday.

After a short stay in Bermuda we put to sea for our next port of call which was 'Jamaica'. Yes! HMS Jamaica was going to visit Jamaica. Before our arrival the usual notices were to be seen on the ships notice boards warning of the places and things to be avoided. These always seem to include VD and in the case of Jamaica it warned about the dangers of the locally brewed 'black rum'. Of course a certain element of the ships company ignored these notices and paid the consequences.

At this early part of the commission there was already a 'keep fit cum body building club' on board and they were, in the eyes of most of us, known as the ships 'toughies'. We duly arrived in Kingston, the capital of Jamaica.

There were many visits on board by local dignitaries and the ships Guard of Honour and Band were kept very busy. The ship was presented with silver, including three silver bugles. Which were kept in a large glass fronted case in the Wardroom.

The ships company landed for a march through Kingston headed by our band and it was obvious that Jamaica was a very different sort of place than Bermuda. We soon found this out as we were marching around when a large crowd started chanting," We don't want your guns and drums, we

want food”, Yes, they were a very poor country. After a few days in Kingston one of the ships ‘toughies’ returned to the ship in a real fighting mood. He had been drinking the dreaded ‘black rum’ and it took four of the biggest and toughest Royal Marines to hold him down. When he sobered-up the next day he was the most subdued person you would wish to meet. That ‘black rum’ really was a drop of ‘jungle juice’.

From Kingston we sailed to Port Antonio which was a much smaller town than Kingston. The ship was inundated with a gift of Bananas, and after three days in harbour, the upper deck was piled high with them. Every conceivable stowage place on the ship was crammed full of bananas and the only thing we could do was to put to sea and then off load all the bananas on deck, over the side.

Whilst visiting Jamaica I was asked by one of the Royal Marines Sergeants if I would like to go sailing. As he was a qualified coxswain it was in order for him to take one of the ships boats away. So it was that I had my first experience of boat sailing. We sailed in a 27ft whaler, which in those days was included as one of the ships lifeboats. After sailing around for a while we beached the boat and made our way to a convenient beachside bar where I was treated to a drink. [coke I think] We were then joined by two Hollywood stars who happened to be spending their vacation there. I discovered we were in Montego Bay, which is now a very popular holiday resort. The stars by the way were John Hodiak and his wife Ann Baxter.

From Jamaica we sailed through the Panama Canal to South America where our next port of call was Valpariso, in Chile.



HMS Jamaica making her way through the Panama Canal 1949.



The Royal Marines band of HMS Jamaica marching to a wreath laying ceremony

In Valparaiso, Chile 1949

These cruises were known as 'Showing the Flag' and the aim was to promote Goodwill.

When we arrived in Valparaiso we were visited by a local 'Cattle Baron'. A Scotsman who had arrived in Chile many years ago and who had made a great success of raising cattle. He came on board and wanted to know if he could entertain the whole ships company ashore, at his ranch to a massive BBQ. Of course he was told that at no time would the whole of the ships company would be allowed ashore at the same time as there was always to be at least one part of the watch on board.[The ship is divided into Port and Starboard watch. These are further divided in the 1st and 2nd part giving a total of four parts.]Anyway he said he would be quite happy to entertain as many as the ships company who wished to attend, and would it be possible for the ships 'butchers' to attend as there would be plenty of meat to carve. So whilst we were there, a date was arranged and on the appointed day a stream of buses arrived on the jetty. Of course, a lot of the ships company thought it was too much of a good thing, and that with so many people going it would not turn out to be a very good affair so not too many attended. I went, and it was certainly an eye opener. The ranch stretched out into the hills on one side and right down to the sea on the other. There were horses in a coral for anyone who wished to ride, and under an avenue of trees there were six cows carcasses over spits slowly cooking. There were ample barrels of beer set on tables and quite honestly, there were not enough people attending to do justice to the Rancher's effort. Besides the cattle cooking and the beer, there were other things to eat and there was just plenty of everything. I had my first experience of horse riding but I must admit it didn't last long as I fell off. I was unhurt as beer dulls the senses and I fell on sand so there ended by first and last riding lesson. It was at this time that the watch I had bought in Gibraltar whilst serving on board HMS Vanguard had developed a hole on the back, [next to my wrist] and it put paid to its working parts. Another function we were invited to was a dance to be held by the local fire brigade. It was being sponsored by the local British community and it turned out to be a very enjoyable evening.



and I at the Dance in Valparaiso, Chile 1949.

Freddy Ford

Freddie and I spent most of the evening with the British Consul and his family and Freddy got on very well with the Consul's daughter. To make things better for him, he had been taught Spanish at school and during the evening he went up on the stage and sang one of the popular songs of the day in Spanish. After that he couldn't put a foot wrong.

As was usual on these type of visits, we marched through the town and wreaths were laid at the local National Memorial. Chile turned out to be a completely different sort of place to Jamaica and we were made most welcome.

During our stay in Valparaiso Freddie was invited to tea at the British Consuls house and whilst he was there he was asked if he would like some 'cream cakes' he had replied that he would, but alas, there were none. That was our last day in Valparaiso as we would be sailing the next morning.

The next day, just before the gangway was removed, the British Consul's car came to a screeching halt on the jetty and the driver came on board, and asked the first person he met, who happened to be the Commander, "Could these cream cakes be delivered to Bugler Ford with the compliments of the Consul's wife".

Our next port of call in Chile was a little further down the coast in Coquimbo. A much smaller port than Valparaiso. It was a great surprise to see the British Consuls car parked on the jetty on our arrival and when we were secured alongside the driver came on board and wished to know if Bugler Ford could escort the Consuls daughter on a picnic.

It was while in South America that I was selected for the Ships water polo team and we never went short of opponents. If we were not playing one of the local teams, there was always interdepartmental games to be played. I continued to play water polo throughout the commission.



Ships Water Polo Team.

From Coquimbo we sailed up the coast to Lima in Peru and spent a few days doing the usual things; laying wreaths at the local memorial, sightseeing and attending various outings arranged by the local British community. It was while we were there that there was a terrific earth tremor, or should I say sea tremor. The whole ship shook, as if a giant hand had grabbed it and had given it a good shaking. The locals took this sort of thing as normal but to me it was something very different and I wouldn't like to experience it again.

Whilst we were in Lima no one was allowed to take a cigarette lighter ashore as it was against the law. The reason for this was that some years previous a match factory had been built, and to ensure its success, a law was passed banning the use of cigarette lighters. [strange, but true.]

One of the things that became common knowledge during the latter part of our stay in Lima was that the British community had been forced to lay-on various functions for the ships company as it was realized that a lot of the ships company were becoming too friendly with the local

population and the powers to be didn't like that very much. Still, a good time was had by all. Those days are now well in the past and only the memories remain.

It was while we were in Lima that we had our first deserter. One of the Royal Marines went missing and as it was known that he was very friendly with one of the local girls it was assumed that he was with her. After we departed Lima one of the marines on board confirmed this was the case.

From Lima we sailed up to Buenaventura in Columbia and that was a really under developed place. The notices on the ships notice boards before our arrival this time stated that Venereal Disease was most prominent, and ALL personnel proceeding ashore were to be issued with condoms. As Duty Bugler my place of duty in harbour was on the quarterdeck where the gangway was situated and it was strange to see the quartermaster issuing condoms to everyone going ashore, and this included the ships chaplain.

I don't remember why we had called into Buenaventura as there was nothing there. I think we were only there a day or two and that was the only place during the whole of the commission where I never went ashore.

We made our way through the Panama canal and paid a visit to St. Johns, Antigua, which was a very pleasant place with beautiful beaches.

A few days later we headed to Cuba where we paid a visit to the American Naval Base at Guantanamo. While we were there I went ashore to the American Marines Club and whilst socializing, one of the US Marines was boasting how, while he was on duty at the 'brig' one of his mates tried to escape but he had shot him in the leg. [Who needs enemies with friends like that?] This is the same American base that now houses Taliban prisoners. A prison in those far off days, and still a prison in these modern times.

From there, after a few days we sailed once again and eventually arrived back in Bermuda. I can't remember exactly how many British ships formed the West Indies fleet but HMS Glasgow was another cruiser on station.

As Jamaica was due for a refit in the floating dock prior to cruise of the east coast of the United States the ship was unloaded of everything moveable to make her light enough to enter the dock. The ships company was moved to a lovely rest area on the other side of Bermuda known as 'Warwick Camp, which was situated on high ground above the world famous 'Horseshoe Bay'. This bay is famous for films that were shot there to show the very fine pink sand, and was a natural setting for the many films made by the American film companies.

Shortly after our arrival at Warwick Camp we were told by the unit just leaving that it was a common practice to hold 'bottle parties' on the beach and that there was a crate of beer buried in the sand, which we could have if we could find it. Of course, there were many attempts to find this beer but to no avail. It might even still be there. Not having been at the camp for more than a day or two we had to return to the dockyard area for the final of the 'Governors Cup'. This was an inter ship football competition and the final was to be played between HMS Jamaica and HMS Glasgow. The game was to be played on the Saturday prior to the Jamaica going into the floating dock on the following Monday.

The cup was won by the Jamaica and before the cup was presented to the captain of our team by the Commander in Chief of the station, he said he had a most important announcement to make. This was to the effect that HMS Amethyst was trapped up the Yangtze river in China and that HMS Jamaica was to leave Bermuda for the Far East in two days time.

This meant that we only had one and a half days to return the ships company from Warwick Camp, re-load the ship with all that had been removed for our intended refit and sail from Bermuda.

It was a case of 'All hands in' and we were ready to sail on the Monday morning.

Of course, this was supposed to have been a two and a half year commission with our base being Bermuda but now we were off to the Far East and that upset quite a few people. It was meant to be a 'married accompanied' commission for the married men who's wives had already sailed from England, and were on their way to Bermuda. It also meant that we would now not be making a trip to America.

Anyway, we sailed from Bermuda and started our journey to Hong Kong.



HMS Jamaica as she leaves Bermuda for Hong Kong.

'Waving Goodbye' to

Once more through the Panama canal and into the Pacific ocean. As we were to join the Far Eastern Fleet, the ship had to be painted a different shade of grey, so as we sailed along at an economical cruising speed of fourteen knots, staging was placed over the ships side and so the ship was painted while we headed for Hong Kong.

Whilst the ship was being painted, the band would 'rig up' on the upper deck and play. This would break the monopoly and keep the ships company happy listening to the different kinds of music being played.

Having very little to do during the evenings various activities were organized and this took the form of boxing matches, musical concerts and various other forms of entertainment.

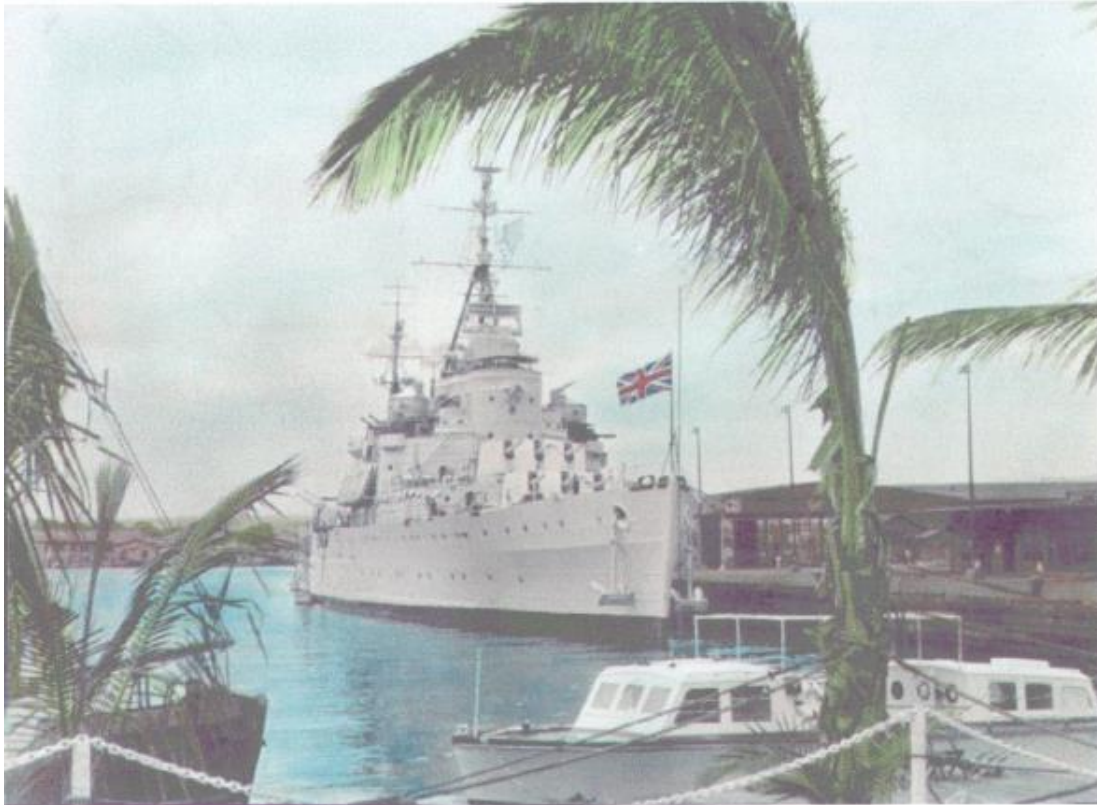
On our way to Hong Kong the ship was stopped on a couple of occasions and 'Hands to Bathe' was piped so that it was possible to have a swim in the Pacific Ocean.



Cooling off on the way to Hong Kong, May 1949.

When the ship stopped to allow bathing over the side, a 'boom' was positioned which enabled swimmers to climb a ladder to get back on board. This is the only occasion that I can remember when I have felt 'scared' in the water. For some reason I began to think of the depth of the water under me and realized that it could have been miles, and then I thought of what might have lurked in those depths.

During the crossing of the Pacific we were able to witness some very impressive sights in the form of lightning, that we were told were very common and known as electrical storms. The sky would light up, but not just from one direction but from the whole 360 degrees of the horizon. Although nowadays it is possible to see lightning on television, to see it in what could be classed as a 360 degree picture show, is very different.



HMS Jamaica in Pearl Harbour 13th May 1949

Even sailing at an economical speed it was not possible to make Hong Kong in a single journey so it was that we called into the American Naval Base in Pearl Harbour, Hawaii, to re-fuel.

As we were only going to be there for one day we were still hoping to get ashore for a quick look around, but shore leave was rationed to four hours each watch.

We were then only allowed to visit the PX store within the naval base as all leave in Hawaii had been suspended. We were informed that prior to our arrival some stupid American sailor had decided to urinate on one of the national monuments and the local population were not very pleased. The PX store, [which was like an Aladdin's cave] was something to behold. Full of all the things that were still unobtainable at home and I think their supply of 'nylons' were well and truly depleted that day.

Continuing our cruise to Hong Kong with the sea as calm as a sheet of glass it was so strange at night to see the sky illuminated by lightening almost every night around the horizon.

We were due to arrive in Hong Kong on the 28th May, a day after my 18th birthday and I carried out double duties so that I would be free to go ashore on our first day in. Having a birthday the day before arriving, presented a little problem as it was the custom to receive 'sippers' of rum from your messmates and rum and bugling really doesn't mix. Still, I carried out my duty without any mishaps although I wasn't quite sure how, and so to our arrival as part of the Far Eastern Fleet.

Hong Kong in those days was really unbelievable. Things were so cheap and it was possible to buy just about anything. I used to go ashore, have a trip to the cinema, book a cabin for the night in the China Fleet Club and have a meal and all for the princely sum of \$5 Hong Kong dollars. As there were 16 dollars to the pound that worked out to 6 shillings and 3 [old] pence which in present day coinage is just over 30pence. Yes! Although it sounds unbelievable, it is fact. That was in 1949 and of course, things have changed since then. In those days there were no 'Chinese takeaways' in the UK and to actually see the natives of China was still very much a novelty. I even saw some old ladies with 'bound feet' but I will admit they were seated and I didn't see them walking, or should I say 'hobbling' as I am told that was all they could manage. Shortly after our arrival on the 'China Station' HMS London arrived from the Yangtze area and some time later HMS Belfast arrived. Both having been stationed at the mouth of the Yangtze river in case the Amethyst made a dash for it. We then took our turn at patrolling the mouth of the Yangtze river. Of course, the likes of me didn't know anything about it at the time but the Amethyst was preparing to make a dash for freedom, and when she did, we were waiting for her. We met up with her on a Sunday afternoon. Our band was playing 'Cruising down the river on a Sunday afternoon', which was a popular tune at the time and of course, very apt for the occasion. We were carrying some of the original ships company of the Amethyst but her Commanding Officer said he would continue to Hong Kong with the crew who had remained on board during her entrapment. We did send over our doctors and also the mail that had accumulated for her. We then escorted her back to Hong Kong where she received a tremendous reception from the rest of the fleet.

After some essential repairs she then sailed from Hong Kong homeward to Plymouth.

Since that time a film was made of the adventure entitled, 'The Yangtze Incident'. It is sometimes shown on television but I don't suppose it is of much interest to anyone who was not connected in some way with the event.

We continued to carry out the normal functions on the station, exercising with the fleet and getting to know the 'ins and outs' of Hong Kong.

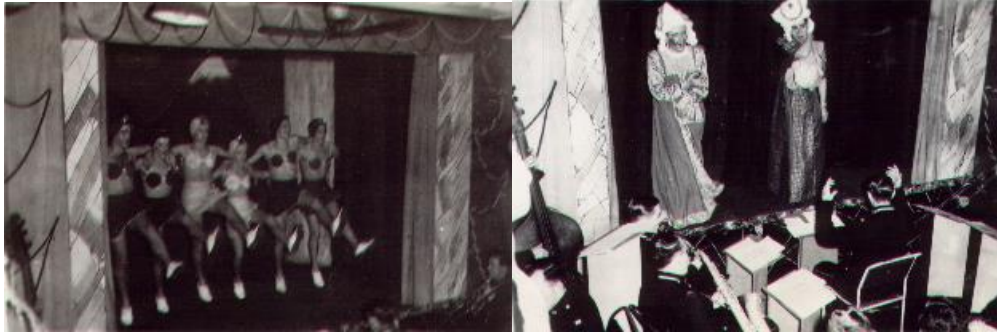
As we were now a permanent part of the Far Eastern Fleet we started visiting various countries in that part of the world.

One of our trips took us to Jesselton, North Borneo. The only thing that I had heard about Borneo prior to our visit was something from childhood that referred to the 'wild men of Borneo'. This I found out to mean the 'Head Hunters of Borneo' which I was told still happened in the forests in the interior. We had a visit on board by some of the chiefs of the Diak tribe who were reputed to still carry out their ancient traditions. They took a fancy to some beads that Freddie Ford had acquired and he was only too pleased to hand them over as gifts.

With about seven hundred people making up the compliment of the ship there were bound to be several talented people on board. So it was decided to form a 'ships concert party' and so from all different parts of the ship the concert party was formed. The first thing to be produced was a pantomime. This was Cinderella and it was written, in rhyme by the band sergeant, Stan Glasspole.

Needless to say it was in the service idiom, and caused many a laugh.

It was presented in the Ships cinema [the old hanger] and it had to be repeated in order that all members of the ships company could attend. This gave the chance of people who were on duty one day to see it on the next. It was so good, [so we were told] that we were asked to perform in the China Fleet Club Cinema which was adjacent to the Fleet Club. We did a 'one night only' show and the place was packed out.



The opening Chorus.

The ugly sisters.



The 'Finale' of the ships pantomime 1949.

By the time we had finished performing, Freddy Ford and I knew the script by heart. As part of the buglers job on the Jamaica, Fred and I were required to clean all the 'tin gear' [the aluminium shelving, and all the metalwork in the mess] on a Saturday morning prior to the Captain's inspection.

To help the time pass while doing our chores, we would talk our way through the pantomime script.

Of course, with the passing of time it would be impossible for me to talk my way through it now, but I can remember the beginning that went like this.

[Ugly sisters to Cinderella.]

"Cinders!, Cinders! You little hag, get me the 'ticklers', and roll me a fag".

"Cinders!, Cinders!, you little oaf, do you think you're paid to sit there and loaf?"

[Cinderella replies.]

“ But sisters dear I try so hard to please, I’ve got ‘prickly heat’ upon my knees”.

As part of our routine we had to exercise with the rest of the fleet taking part in maneuvers and various other activities. These ensured that we were on top form for any incident that might occur. After these exercises were completed it was usual to have a couple of days to relax and on one of these occasions we anchored in the bay off one of the small islands not far from Hong Kong. For a day of rest the ships motorboats were provided to take all but the duty watch ashore to the deserted beach.



Ban Yan parties landing and ashore for the day.

Packed meals and drinks were provided and so most of the ships company found themselves on the beach with the boats due to return later in the day. It was very hot on this occasion and there was very little shade around. I know that some people rigged canvas awnings between some of the small trees and these afforded a certain amount of shade. I remember the day so well as one of the ‘stokers’ who had spent most of his time in the engine room and had not been exposed to the sun very much since leaving England fell asleep under one of the awnings. That would have been alright except that the sun had moved around leaving ‘stokes’ exposed to its harsh rays. For some unknown reason, no one had taken any notice of him so that when he awoke, he was well and truly burnt. His skin had cracked and when he tried to move, he was in agony. When the first boat arrived to start taking people back to the ship his situation was explained and a message was sent to the ship by a signaling lamp and a doctor arrived in the next boat ashore and the stoker was injected with something to ‘put him to sleep’ and he was returned to the ship on a stretcher. We didn’t see much of him for some time but eventually, healed, he was discharged from the sickbay.

As it was very humid in Hong Kong during the summer, the powers-to-be decided to open a summer anchorage in the northern part of Japan. This was to include a canteen, and it was decided that HMS Jamaica would take up all the necessary supplies. This meant that all the ships ammunition was to be off loaded in order that the beer and the rest of the stores required for the intended canteen could be stowed on board. This was going to be a cruise up to Japan visiting various places on the way to Omanato. In addition to the ships company we took six soldiers on board who came with us solely as a holiday cruise.

Our first port of call in Japan was a place called Sasebo. Once again it was very strange visiting somewhere that you had heard about but didn’t know anything about except what had happened during the war. Things were as cheap in Japan as they were in Hong Kong and it was very interesting just walking around the shops and seeing the local population going about their business.

From Sasebo we sailed to Kure, and that was the place where the Atomic Bomb was exploded, which was the main factor to bring World War Two to an end in the Far East. There were still signs of devastation and a plaque had been erected on the remains of the building over which the bomb had exploded.



The Atomic Bomb exploded above this building bringing World War II to a end.



'Manning the side', for a visiting Army Officer whilst in Japan.

At this time Japan was still occupied by the American forces and we were in what was known as 'Occupied Japan'.

It was usual, in nearly all the places we visited for a cocktail party to be held on the ship for the local dignitaries, and various service personnel in the locality. On one of these occasions Freddie Ford and I had been 'asked', yes! 'asked' by the Captain of Marines if we would both sound off Sunset, First Post and Last Post at the appropriate times. It was after we had sounded off Last Post that the Quartermaster had received a phone call from the Captain who wanted to see both Royal Marines Buglers in his cabin. We duly presented ourselves and entered the 'holy of holies'. The Captain then told us that he often listened to our bugling and that he was very pleased with what he heard. When it came to the 'Post calls', he wanted to know if it was possible for us to increase the length of the very last note as that was the way he really liked to hear it. Of course, we assured him that it could be done and that really made us 'The flavor of the Month'. It was not very often that the Captain of a ship gave personal praise.

On other occasions when the ship was secured alongside, the band usually performed a display on the jetty which culminated with the playing of Sunset. Strange you know; the Navy could alter the time of Sunset to suit themselves, but if a bugler was late to sound off under normal circumstances, he was in trouble. So our cruise progressed.



Me, prior to a band display in Japan 1950.

We next visited Yokusuka, which was the nearest we got to Tokyo. There was an American Naval band stationed there and they invited our band ashore to listen to them rehearsing. Being off duty I joined them and between cups of coffee we listened while they played. One of the American bandsman handed around the parts of a tune he had written for the band to try, just to see how it sounded. At the same time as they played, an old Japanese cleaner was making notes on a piece of paper and it turned out that the cleaner was a musician and that evening the tune that the American had written was being played in the nightclubs around town. Yes! The best copiers in the world.

We eventually arrived at Ominato to find a disused airstrip and couple of old huts. This was to be the Fleets' summer anchorage. We soon found out that Ominato was a small island with a snow

covered mountain. There was little to do there except play

football or climb the mountain.[It wasn't a very big mountain.]

It was while we were enjoying a very basic simple time there that we heard that the Korean War had started and that our presence was required. We sailed back to Sasebo, which was to become our base while we were involved in the conflict.

As we had off loaded our ammunition before our trip to Japan we had to re-ammunition ship on arrival at Sasebo. This was done by securing alongside our sister ship HMS Kenya, that had arrived on station, and transferring some of her ammunition.

Things became a little awkward being alongside Kenya as our daily routines were slightly different from theirs and this caused quite a lot of confusion. When one of us sounded a bugle call, or an order was piped over the ships broadcasting system no one was quite sure which ship should react. This problem was soon sorted out by preceding each bugle call or order by first stating the ships name immediately the broadcasting system was switched on.

After a short stay in Sasebo we were on our way to Korea and our first operation was to patrol the east coast to intercept any coastal road traffic by shelling them with our long and intermediate range guns. We appeared to be having a certain amount of success and all was going well until we came under fire ourselves from guns ashore. One of their shells hit the tripod of our mainmast and exploded killing five of the crew of a bofors gun. This gun had been manned by the six holidaying soldiers we had on board with us, who had volunteered to man the gun.



Funeral at sea for the Army personal.

We continued to patrol the coasts of Korea, with breaks in our temporary base at Sasebo.

When a ship is in harbour, the shore leave to be granted is broadcast each day over the ships system in addition to being displayed on ships 'Daily Orders'. As an addition to the usual broadcast the words, 'The ship is under sailing orders', is included when this is to be the last leave granted before sailing.

Anyone late back to the ship, or missing the ship altogether, when 'charged' would be deemed to have committed an 'aggravated offence' this would carry a heavier punishment if the offender was found guilty and received punishment.

I remember two such offences whilst we were engaged in the Korean War. One was the case of a 'stoker' who had drunk too much on shore and missed the ship. He was returned to the Jamaica by means of a 'boatswains chair' whilst we were re-stored at sea from a Fleet Auxiliary Vessel, and the other case was something very different.

Leading Electricians Mate [LEM] Dennis, was late returning to the ship whilst she was 'under sailing orders', and when he ended up in front of the Captain, this is the story he told.

He said that during the War, he had been retreating with others from the Japanese, in a lorry in Burma, when the lorry had been strafed by a Japanese aircraft. The lorry had been hit and some of the others traveling with him had been killed. He had found himself laying in a ditch beside the road and there were bodies strewn around. Some were dead and others were wounded. In the distance he saw Japanese soldiers approaching, and as they neared the dead and wounded they were killing the wounded and robbing all the bodies. He had 'played dead' and was only robbed.

Among the things taken from him was a watch with a very distinctive face. He had seen the soldier who had robbed him through half closed eyes, but he had not moved. It was while he was in Sasebo having a drink he recognized his watch on the wrist of the person clearing the empty glasses from the table and when he looked up he reckoned it was the same person who had robbed him. He had said "I know you from Burma", and with that the Japanese started to run away. He had chased him but soon lost him in one of the small back streets; and that was the reason he gave for being late getting back to the ship. The Captain thought about what had been said and then asked LEM Dennis, "What would you have done if you had caught this man?" Dennis had replied that he didn't know. The Captain then said, "In all my years as a Naval Officer I have heard some very weird and wonderful stories. I don't know if I believe you or not but I am going to give you the benefit of the doubt". "Case dismissed". This story came from one of the regulating staff present at the 'Captains Table'. Whether it was true or not we will never know, but that was the story that was told.

Another very strange, but true story presented itself while we were involved in the Korean War. Because of this emergency, reservists in the Royal Marines and Royal Navy were recalled to service and all the ships of the Far Eastern Fleet were brought up to wartime strength. From a compliment of Seven Hundred our numbers increased to One Thousand. This meant that the strength of all departments were increased. One of the additional Royal Marines to join us was a Marine Chamberlain, the very same marine who had deserted when the Jamaica was in Peru.

His story then came out.

He had been attracted to the daughter of a hill farmer who had been visiting Lima whilst the ship had been there. He had been invited back to the farm which was some way out from the city. In due course he had married the farmers daughter and settled down at the hill farm.

During a visit to Santiago, the capital of Peru, a routine check of passports was being made and as Chamberlain had not possessed one, further enquiries were made and it was discovered that he was a deserter from the Royal Marines. He had been flown back to England, Court Marshalled and after the completion of his punishment, allowed to continue his service. He reckoned that if

he had held a passport he would have still been in Peru.

The 'big push' in South Korea was yet to come, and it soon became clear that this was going to be a very big offensive.

Ships of all shapes and sizes began to gather and so it was that in company with several American warships we took our position in the Bay of Inchon, on the west coast of Korea. The assembled ships carried out a bombardment of Inchon for three days and nights prior to the landing of thousands of troops.

It was during this time that the fleet was attacked by Russian built Migs. They flew in from out of the sun and let fly with bombs and gunfire.

My place of duty during 'action stations' was on the bridge. I was watching these planes approaching when the ships Commander, Commander 'Billy' Beloe dragged me down to the deck saying "Get down you Bloody Fool". It was then that we heard the armour piercing bullets hitting our superstructure. Not everyone was lucky as some of the guns crew just below the bridge were hit. I guess the Commander most probably saved my life that day.



Where they hit.



Some of our wounded being visited in Hospital.

After we had served our time in Korean waters we made our way back to Hong Kong and finally, we were told we would be sailing to Singapore for a refit. On our arrival in Singapore the ships company were moved to the Naval Barracks, HMS Terror.



HMS Terror the Naval Base, Singapore.

It was strange living ashore after such a long time on board. It was so quiet. No motors or fans running, which is a permanent feature of ships life. Of course we did not have to worry very much about routine as, although the ships company were transported to the ship daily to work, the band and buglers remained in HMS Terror.



Me diving from the 5 metre board 1950.

There was plenty of sport to be played as everyone worked a 'tropical routine' which meant that work was only carried out until lunchtime. There were no bugling duties in Terror so Freddie and I had it quite easy. There was a lovely swimming pool and we spent a lot of our time there.

Whilst we were living ashore we had a visit from the Fleet Bandmaster, who was a Commissioned Officer, and it was decided that we would join up with the band from HMS Triumph, which was also in Singapore and give a Band Display.

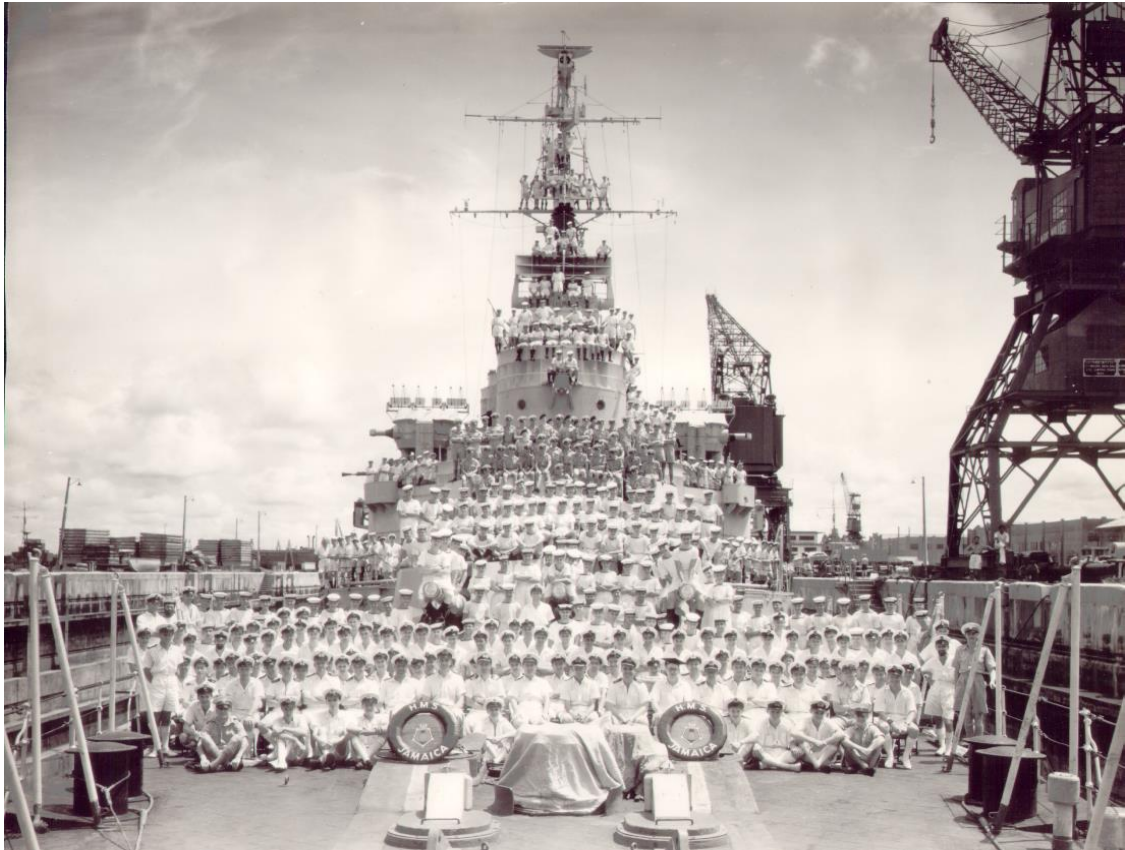
As the Fleet Bandmaster was normally stationed in Hong Kong he had only brought so much of his kit with him and this included his 'Blues' which were made of a much lighter material than ours; and so it was that when we actually performed this display we wore our UK blue uniforms. By the time the display was completed everyone in the band had the sweat literally running off them. The Fleet Bandmaster was not the flavour of the month.

The city of Singapore was about seventeen miles from the Naval Base but buses were available and Singapore itself was a very interesting place to visit. Freddy and I used to spend just about every evening playing Tombola. [Bingo] There always seemed to be a game available, and one of us won just about every time we played.

As there were quite a few ships companies accommodated in HMS Terror, whether it be a Cruiser, Frigate or Submarine, one or other of the ships would organize Tombola. Even if there were not any games within HMS Terror we would take a trip into Singapore and play at the Union Jack Club or one of the other venues.

It so happened that Fred had a long run of winning, and one evening, although we were both going to play, he said he wanted to play on his own, without sharing.

That night I won, and although I tried to share the winnings with him, he wouldn't agree and from then on we always played our own games without any further sharing.



Ships company photograph whilst in dry dock Singapore 1950.



Freddy and I November 1950.

Having spent quite some time in sub tropical and tropical conditions a lot of our lightweight shirts were beginning to wear and arrangements were made for us to change them for new ones from the local Indian police stores. This appeared to be fine until they had their first wash and then the colour ran and the whole shirt shrunk. As Freddie was the smallest R.M. on board, he was given dozens of shirts and when he was told off for having the wrong colour shirt [they turned out white] he would just say, " They were issued".

As the refit came to an end we were informed that we would be returning home, and were given a date so that family and friends could make arrangements to meet the Jamaica when she arrived back in Plymouth.

I was still writing to Bernice and I invited her to come on board when we arrived home.



Marching in Aden [Note Fred's white shirt.]

The ships band

Our first port of call was Trincomalee, which is in, what was then called Ceylon.

Next we called in at Aden where I remember we went ashore for some form of marching with the Band.

Through the Suez Canal and onward to Malta, and then on to Gibraltar.

That was our final port of call before we sailed for Plymouth.

We anchored in Plymouth Sound early in the morning, making sure that everything was 'spick and span' for our entry to the Dockyard.

By the time we had secured alongside, the Jamaica had sailed some 78,000 miles since leaving Plymouth and it was nice to be home.

The ship was inundated with friends and families and by the time I got to the gangway, Bernice was the only person left on the jetty waiting to come on board.

The powers to be had decided that Jamaica would soon be transferred to Rosyth in Scotland and her compliment would be reduced.

For some reason the Commander wanted two Buglers to remain with the ship, so although the band had left, to return to the School of Music, Freddie and I were to remain on board.

There was now the question of foreign service leave to be taken and Freddie went first. Whilst he was on leave we sailed up to Scotland and there took our place alongside the wall in the dockyard. It was when the ship arrived in Scotland that I heard of Freddie's accident.

He was riding a bicycle down a steep hill in Plymouth and he failed to stop when he reached the bottom and ended up a crumpled heap, having hit a wall. Amongst other things, he broke his leg and was admitted to the Royal Naval Hospital.

Once in there, his foreign service leave was put on hold. This allowed me to take my leave. On my return to the ship Freddie was still enjoying leave as he had been granted plaster leave and that was followed by the balance of his foreign leave.

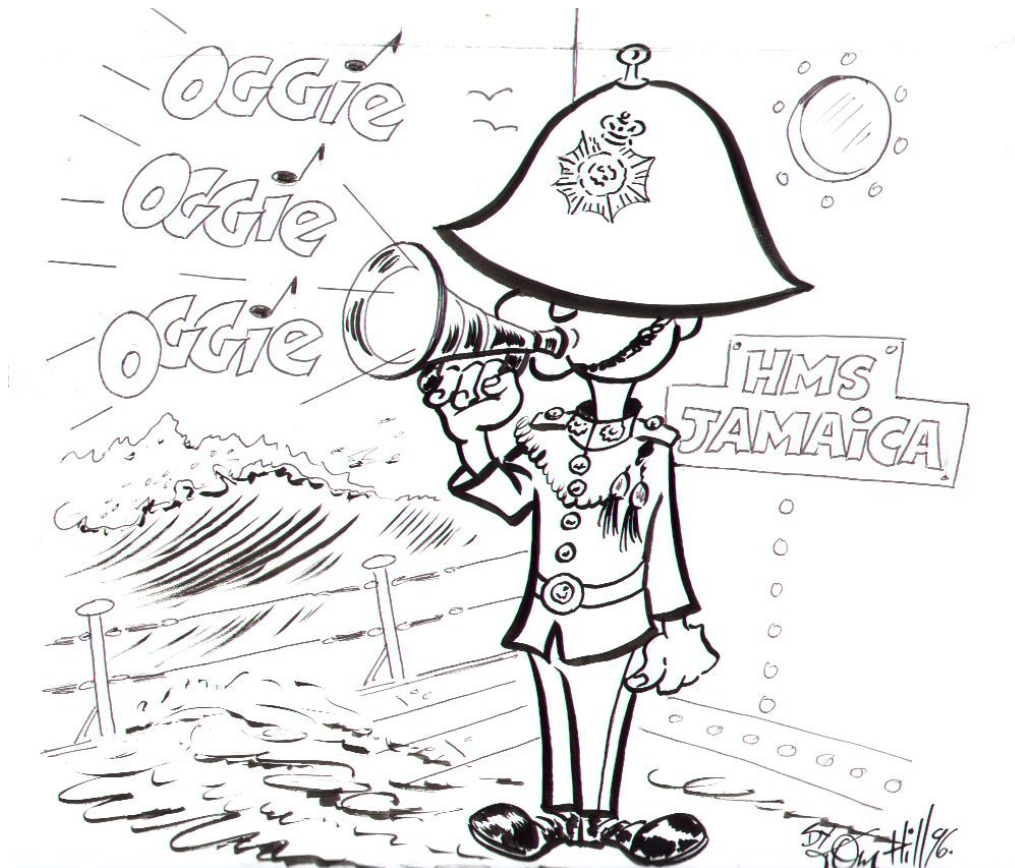
Feeling rather 'fed-up' and on my own, I thought that if I could somehow break my leg, I could also enjoy all sorts of leave.

With this in mind I took myself off to the local Ice skating rink, thinking that if I fell hard enough, I might end up with so extra leave.

Try as I may, there were no broken bones. I did have a few falls but nothing serious and no real injuries and I managed to learn to ice skate.

This left me on the ship on my own. The Band and the RM Detachment had long since departed and I was working a day routine that was finished at 4.30 daily with just the forenoon duty on Saturdays and Sundays. This gave me plenty of time to myself. I had now moved into the Bandmasters cabin as the Royal Marines' mess deck was empty.

The remaining ships company were informed that the Jamaica was soon to be scrapped and it was only a matter of time before the ships company would be returning to their respective units. Having learnt that the Jamaica was to be scrapped, it went without saying that all the non essential 'bits and pieces' around the ship would be disposed of, so.....with this in mind, I made a list, of all the 'Dance Band music' that had been left on board for any band that may have been joining at a future date, and knowing that it had no further use, [it would only be thrown out.] I took it ashore and asked the leader of a local dance band if it was any use to him. Well, I did manage to 'thin out' all the unwanted 'bits and pieces' of music and I was then given 'free admittance to the local Dance Hall for the remainder of the time I was in Rusty.



Guess Who.

Soon after this Bernice and I decided to get married so a date was fixed and I was granted weekend leave for the ceremony.

We were married in the registry office in Plymouth. No photographs or reception and then we returned to Rosyth. We rented the upstairs flat of a house and there we stayed until I was eventually drafted back to Plymouth.

Whilst we were staying in this flat, the owners of the house, a mature Scottish couple, gave us some 'home grown' vegetables from the garden. Although we didn't have very much from them, we stopped after a very short while when we discovered that they watered their vegetables from the 'pot' they kept under their bed at night.

CHAPTER FIVE

RMB PLYMOUTH

It was December 1951 when I returned to Plymouth and as we had nowhere to stay we were given an upstairs room in Bernice's parents house for the time being. Things were quite crowded as in addition to us, there were Bernice's parents, her sister and brother.

I continued as part of the 'Corps of Drums' with the Plymouth Group Band and performed at various functions.

King George VI died on 6th February 1952 and we were informed that the Plymouth Group Band and Drums were required in London for the funeral. Prior to departing for London it was deemed necessary for the Band and Drums to practice 'slow marching' as the funeral route was going to be a long one. This entailed slow marching out of barracks and traveling several miles to the outskirts of Plymouth before countermarching, [the means of traveling in the opposite direction from the original, whilst still playing] to return to barracks. I cannot remember exactly what marches we played during this time but I am sure we managed to play quite a few. The actual 'Funeral Marches' were not played at this time and they were only rehearsed in the band practice room. Still, from Plymouth, the Band and Drums moved to Portsmouth where we continued to rehearse and by the time we actually arrived in London, for the Funeral we were all very 'foot sore' and I just don't know who thought 'practicing marching around in slow time', was going to be of any benefit to anyone.



The Plymouth Group Royal Marines Band

on King George VI Funeral Procession in London

The Bugle Major in barracks was now my old instructor 'Butch' Bailey. Having been promoted to Sergeant when the old Bugle Major had retired. He was now in complete charge of Bugler Training.

Early in June 1952 I was informed that together with the Bugle Major, I had been selected, with other buglers from Portsmouth and Chatham to go to Helsinki, in Finland to play the opening 'Fanfare' at the 1952 Olympic Games. We were to join HMS Swiftsure at Chatham the following month and would sail on her to Helsinki. From the day we were told, I spent every working day bugling with the Bugle Major. I was excused all other duties and by the time we finished bugling each day my lips were like lumps of rubber.

On the 7th of July 1952 our son Philip was born. I wanted him to be named Paul, Gerald but in my absence, Bernice had him registered as Philip, Paul Gerald, so instead of him being PGR the same as me, he has had to put up with PPGR.

On the 15th July 1952 The Bugle Major and I set off for Chatham. It didn't take me long to realize that 'Bugles' didn't have a clue on getting from one place to another. I had to arrange all our moves from station to train, and train to station until we eventually arrived at Chatham where there was transport to take us to HMS Swiftsure.

The Bugle Major was settled into the Sergeants Mess and I found a place in the Marines mess deck. As it was late in the day and nearly everyone was ashore, any further sorting out and arranging was left until the next day.

On the following day, came the big SHOCK! We were informed by the Bandmaster that all the extra buglers that had be drafted aboard from the various Groups were on board solely to augment the ships buglers for duties, and to form a Corps of Drums for the band. There was nothing known about Fanfares at the Olympics, and the Swiftsure was only going to Helsinki as an escort to the Trinity House ship Patricia on which the Duke of Edinburgh was being accommodated.

So it was that we sailed from Chatham with an oversized compliment of Band and Buglers with not very much to do.

It was completely unknown for a Bugle Major to be on a ship and there was nothing for him to do. So throughout our stay on the Swiftsure, all 'Bugles' did was to eat, sleep, drink his 'tot' and go ashore when we were in harbour. It proved to be a very good holiday for him, and I think he enjoyed being such a novelty on the ship.

Although I was by no means the most senior bugler on board I was told to organize the watches for the buglers so that everyone did their fair share. It was not an easy job as some of the older buglers were rather set in their ways and didn't like a 'youngster' telling them what to do. Things were eventually sorted out, and life on board progressed with the easiest possible routine.

The Swiftsure called into a couple of Scandinavian ports on our way to Helsinki but I cannot remember too much about them. One 'snag' that occurred was when the 'dress of the day' was piped as 'shirtsleeves'. The oldest Bugler on board, one Charlie Stretch, turned up on the gangway for duty wearing a 'grand dad shirt', one without a collar, which of course was quite unacceptable and all we could get from Charlie was, "I was issued with this shirt, so I don't see why I can't wear it".

Still, one little word from the Bugle Major, and Charlie soon found a shirt with a collar attached.

On our way up the narrows towards Helsinki we were shadowed by a Russian 'gunboat'. At times it was quite close to us and we could plainly see the Captain on its bridge who turned out to be a woman.

Remember, in those far off days we were not the best of friends with Russia and the gunboat caused a lot of interest.

When we eventually arrived at Helsinki we were offered free tickets for various Olympic events and although I saw some of the boxing I was not too interested in most of the other things that

were taking place, although did attend a reception at the British Embassy that was laid on for some of the ships company. It was a very splendid affair with plenty to eat and drink and was most enjoyable. Whilst there, I was introduced to an English woman, who worked in the embassy and was married to a Finn. She said that as they didn't very often see many British people in Helsinki she would like to invite about a dozen of us out to their weekend villa. She explained that most Finnish people left the city at weekends to visit their villas on the smaller islands. This was left to me to organise and I was told that all we all need to take with us was our bathing trunks and a towel.

I soon managed to arrange for a dozen of us to attend, and at the arranged time, transport arrived on the jetty and we were driven to a lovely villa alongside a lake.

It was suggested that we changed into our swimwear and then we were introduced to the Finnish Sauna. The Sauna was situated in a wooden building at the lakeside and inside there was a fire burning under a pile of fair sized pebbles. The pebbles were very hot and there were benches lining the inner walls of the building. Water was lightly poured over the pebbles and this gave off immediate steam. The heat was almost unbearable and sweat would be pouring off the body in a very short time. After a reasonable time 'sweating it out' we there then invited to run down the landing and jump or dive into the lake. This had been explained to us before entering the Sauna and so we all knew what to do. The shock of the lake water was something to remember, but once out on dry land the effect of the exercise could be felt, and years seemed to drop off and we were running around like twelve year olds. After dressing we were invited to the buffet which had been laid out, and that buffet contained things I had only heard about. There was plenty of everything and it was an occasion to remember. [as I have]

Before we left Helsinki the ship laid on a spectacular 'Firework' display and the local population turned out in their hundreds.

We eventually arrived back in Chatham and the Bugle Major and I disembarked and returned to Plymouth.

For the remainder of 1952/53 I remained with the Plymouth Group Band.

As we now had a son, we found one room was not really enough and we later moved into the upper flat of my parents house.

It was during the latter part of 1952 that I was promoted to Lance Corporal, and although it carried no extra pay it was the first step up the ladder of promotion.

I was drafted to Deal for a Corporals Promotion course which I completed successfully so I was now fully qualified for the rank of Corporal Bugler.

After the course I returned to Plymouth.

By this time the Royal Naval School of Music had become the Royal Marines School of Music and had moved to their new home at Deal. Boy Buglers training ceased at the three Groups and was now carried out at Deal. Buglers lost the Group prefix to their official numbers of CHX, POX or PLY X which signified Chatham, Portsmouth and Plymouth and all new entries simply had RM in front of their number.

Sometime at the beginning of 1953 we were offered a council house on the outskirts of Plymouth and this of course ended our cramped conditions. Although our house was quite a way out of the city centre we settled down to a regular routine and made use of buses for our daily travelling.

In July of 1953 the Plymouth band was required for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, and once again it was deemed necessary to practice long marches around the Plymouth area. This completed we moved to Portsmouth where we continued to march around.

I think that it was during this time in Portsmouth with the Massed Bands available that we also rehearsed, and performed a 'Searchlight Tattoo' in Eastney Barracks. [This was the Royal Marines Barracks for the Portsmouth area.]

One of the pieces we marched to in Slow Time was Ravel's Bolero. This was many years before anyone had ever heard of 'Torvil and Dean'. On one of the evenings that we performed, as soon as we marched into the area, millions of flies rose from the grass and it was one of the worst conditions I had ever encountered on a display.

We eventually traveled to London where practice marches for the Coronation were held in the

early hours of the morning and by the day of the actual Coronation, every one was 'footsore' once again.

We were accommodated in 'Earls Court'. A building that is used for many functions and to say that the accommodation was primitive, is an under statement. Two tier beds with hundreds of servicemen in close proximity was not the ideal place for members of different arms of the service, but little thought was put on our needs in those days.

Although we were all suffering from sore feet we felt sorry for the Band of the 'Blues and Royals' who were normally a mounted band, but for this occasion they were required to march instead of being mounted on horseback. Their footwear was the same as they wore when they were mounted and the thigh length boots were definitely not the best thing for marching in. After we had completed our part in the ceremony we returned to Plymouth.

We were told that Colour television was used for the first time to cover the Coronation ceremony, but up until the present day I have never seen the recordings of that day although it has been shown on a few occasions.

There was a lot of bad feeling when it became known that the only Royal Marines Band to receive Coronation Medals was to be the Royal Yacht Band from Portsmouth who were not involved in any marching but just played outside Westminster Cathedral.

In the early part of 1954 I was sent for by the Drum Major. He asked me, "What would you say if I said you are going on draft as an Acting Corporal"?

I replied, "I would say Thank You Very Much".

So he said, "You are going on draft as a Corporal Bugler".

So I said, "Thank you very much". And at that time I didn't even bother to ask him where I would be going.



CHAPTER SIX

HMS RALEIGH

So it was that I was drafted to HMS Raleigh, in Torpoint, which is a Naval Training Establishment just inside Cornwall, as a paid 'Acting Corporal Bugler'.

I was in charge of four RM Buglers and our duties consisted of, bugling duties for the buglers within the establishment and collectively performing on parade with drums to march the trainees around.

As the facilities were available I resumed my interest in sailing. I was informed that one of the Naval school masters was qualified to take me through a course that would qualify me as a small boat coxswain, so I started the course. Around about this time there was to be a long distance 'sail' from Plymouth to Looe in Cornwall in Naval 27ft whalers, and 32ft cutters. I formed part of the crew for this adventure in a whaler with my course instructor. Things turned out to be quite rough, and what with starting the race late, having missed the issue of our food for the trip, things got off to a bad start.

It took a lot longer than expected to get anywhere near Looe and it was necessary to 'break out' the sealed emergency rations, which were a compulsory item in Naval races of this sort. So, we ended up eating 'hard tack' biscuits and other of the rations.

We eventually arrived at Looe where we spent the night ashore.

On our return trip to Plymouth the next day, the weather was even worse than the previous day and the sea took its toll with masts snapping, and a few of the boats having to be taken in tow by our escort vessel. I was given the helm for most of our homeward trip, and on completion I was informed by my course instructor that I was now a qualified coxswain for small boats.

This meant I could take away the International 14ft International sailing dinghies that were readily available. I managed to sail quite a bit during my time at Raleigh and it was very nice sailing around Plymouth Sound.

It was whilst serving at Raleigh that I was put on my first 'charge'. As I have said, HMS Raleigh is just inside Cornwall and to get there from home it was necessary to catch a bus and then a ferry from the Plymouth side, followed by a bus to the establishment.

Living on the outskirts of Plymouth, I had traveled home on the Saturday lunchtime, had my lunch and then we, the family, had traveled into Plymouth to do some shopping then made a visit to Bernice's parents and we had not arrived home until late at night. As we were all tired we went straight to bed.

The next morning I got up as usual and left the house ready to catch the bus to the ferry. I was required in on Sunday as the Royal Navy held 'Divisions' where all the trainees were on parade, they were inspected and then marched around the parade ground before dispersing.

When I arrived at the bus stop I thought I had missed my usual bus so I thumbed a lift from a passing car. When I explained that I had missed the 7 o'clock bus, the car driver told me it was now 8 o'clock, and that the clocks had been advanced during the night.

That put me an hour behind time, but I managed to catch a ferry followed by a bus to Raleigh and I was in time to carry out my duties on parade. Of course I had been informed by the Naval Regulating Staff that I would be charged the next day for returning late and that I would be seeing the Commander. The next day I was duly marched in front of the Commander and the charge of remaining absent over leave for one hour so many minutes. Asked what I had to say, I explained that I hadn't realized the clocks were being advanced etc., and that although I had returned late, I had returned in time to carry out all my duties.

The Commander said he had heard a number of excuses from Trainees that morning and mine was the worst. I was awarded one days scale, which meant I lost one days pay and one days leave. So at long last I had blotted my copy book. [as the saying goes]

Whilst I was at Raleigh I requested to attend a Sergeants promotion course at Deal which I did and passed with flying colours.



Not so happy having to revert to 'Bugler'.

Smiles as an Acting Corporal Bugler

This made me a Substantive Bugler fully qualified for Sergeant. Which was unheard of. I remained at Raleigh until August 1955 when a drafting order was issued stating that I was to return to Plymouth Barracks. I asked my immediate boss to contact the Adjutant of the barracks to see in what rank I was to return to barracks, as although I was an Acting Corporal I was now fully qualified for Sergeant. The answer came back that they were fully aware of my qualifications but as the NCO compliment was up-to-strength I was to return as a BUGLER. So I duly removed the chevrons from my uniform and returned to barracks as a Bugler.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BACK TO RM BARRACKS

It was very strange returning to barracks in the rank of Bugler having held the Rank of Corporal. Of course, everyone from the Drum Major down, realized that I was unique and that the Corporals in barracks at the time felt uncomfortable knowing that I was highly qualified, as at that time I was the only person in the Buglers branch fully qualified for Sergeant.

The Drum Major called me into the office and asked me what job I would like within the company. I said I was not prepared to sit around the table to learn drum parts and be taught by someone who I could professionally lose and that I would be quite happy to take over the job as 'landing and stairs sweeper'. He replied that there was no way I would be excused performing with the 'Corps of Drums' but that as long as I knew the drum parts required for the band I could work my own routine. So I attended drum practice until I was sure of the parts required and then I left.

It was about this time when my Father lent me £1,000 and we bought our own house. Yes! The house cost £1,000 and you can see how prices have risen since then. It was situated in Devonport but it brought us in from the outskirts and we were nearer to Plymouth City Centre and the Royal Marines Barracks.

It wasn't very long before E Flat Herald Trumpets were introduced to the Buglers Branch. These were something very different from what we had been used to in the past and I was seconded to the Trumpet Fanfare Team.

There were four Trumpets allocated to Plymouth and the same to Portsmouth and Deal. They were to be used to usher Judges into the assizes, and for various other occasions when fanfares were required. They would now be used instead of the bugles for the appropriate engagements. Of course, the first thing to do was to get used to the different sound produced on these instruments compared to the bugle. It also meant playing different Fanfares to those used on the Bugle. I took a liking to these instruments and after some study I started writing fanfares which we could use.

It was usual for two of us to attend the Assizes where we would be provided with lunch, during the midday recess, which was paid for by the Sheriff of the County and sometimes we were actually paid a fee. We performed on a regular basis for some assizes and got to know the officials quite well.

After we played the Judges in, we would then sit in court and listen to the various cases, and they could range from motor offences to murder. As long as we were in position to sound off for the Judges when they left and returned from lunch and on completion of the daily hearing, we could do as we pleased while the court was sitting.

It was during this stint in Barracks that we had a new Drum Major. That is, new to Plymouth but formally from Portsmouth and the Royal Yacht. He was well known as being a strict disciplinarian and we waited his arrival to see how things would change. At the time I was running the Buglers 'tea boat' and I wondered how he would react to that. In fact when he eventually arrived I told him I ran the tea boat he immediately asked how much a week I wanted from him. So the tea boat was still 'afloat' and things continued as normal.

It was at about this time that the Lance Corporal who worked in the office was informed that he would shortly be drafted to Malta. He didn't want to go so I volunteered to take his place thinking that a spell in a warm climate would do us good. A reply came back from the Drafting Office that my request for the draft was denied because, 'They had something else in mind for me'.

During the latter part of 1955 the Band and Drums went to France to play in Paris. Whilst we were there we were accommodated in a French Army barracks. The Commanding Officer of the

barracks had spent some time at Sandhurst and he wanted the best of everything for us during our stay. The Regimental Sergeant Major of the barracks who had served with the French Foreign Legion had been threatened with a return to the desert if there were any complaints from us during our stay in the barracks. A good English speaking private had been assigned to us to forward our every need and things worked out pretty well. The only snag was that the food we were offered was very oily and it didn't suit quite a few members of the band. Needless to say there were several 'quick dashes' to the toilet, and the numbers of the band depleted during our stay as some of the band had to stay close to a toilet, but on the whole we had a good stay. Prior to our return to England we tried to explain that when we left, we would like to take a packed meal with us as we would be traveling for quite a long time. I think we just about got our message across as the day we left we were each issued with half a French stick with a piece of horse meat inside. [no butter or any other filling.] By the time we reached the cross channel ferry the meat was stinking and I think it all found a place where the fishes live.

When we eventually arrived at the Plymouth railway station the Bugle Major [yet another one, and this one was called Rickard!] was there to meet us and I was informed that my promotion to Corporal Bugler had come through and I was to see the Commanding Officer the next day to have my promotion confirmed.



Plymouth Group Herald Trumpet Team 1955.

From left to right

Cpl D Markham, Cpl L T Coumbe, B/Major H Rickard, Cpl P G Rickards, Bug R Faulkner.

Wherever I served there always seemed to be a 'character' around. I remember one such character during a tour of duty in Plymouth Barracks. He was a six foot plus Bugler who came from Yorkshire. His accent was very broad and he had quite a loud voice. We were on parade with the Band and the Director of Music was carrying out an inspection. When he came to this certain bugler, he saw something that was not quite right with his uniform so he indicated this to the Drum Major by poking the said Bugler with his cane. Then he jumped back when the Bugler, in a very loud broad Yorkshire accent said, "Don't poke me with that 'Fu—ing Stick'". The Director of Music, looking rather lost said to the Drum Major, "Put him in cells! put him in

cells!”

But Drummy asked, “What for Sir?”.

“You heard what he said to me didn’t you?” replied the D of M.

“Yes Sir” said Drummy, “But you didn’t have any right to poke him with your ‘Fu—ing Stick”.

“Well, get him off my parade , and I don’t want to see him with the band ever again”.

So that Bugler was never seen with the Band again whenever the D of M was going to be around.

The Band and Drums were kept very busy on various engagements during 1955 and one of our engagements was the Edinburgh Tattoo.

Before actually arriving in Edinburgh we had an engagement somewhere at the other end of the country and we finally arrived in Redford Barracks, on the outskirts of Edinburgh at 2 o’clock in the morning. After unpacking all our kit from the transport and before settling down for the night, the Drum Major told us that, because of the late hour, we could have a lay-in in the morning. After a few hours sleep we were awakened by someone yelling at the top of his voice. The Drum Major and Bandmaster shot out of their cabins, which were situated at the end of our barrack room to find an Army Warrant Officer trying to wake the Band. They told him in no uncertain terms to stop his shouting and clear off. This ‘loud mouth pongo’ then said he was the Barracks Warrant Officer and everyone should be up by this time. He was then told that “This is the Royal Marines Barracks while we are here, and if he wanted to enter he would have to get permission first, and that if he didn’t ‘clear off’ he would be thrown out”.

That got rid of him for a while and we returned to our beds.

Redford barracks had been utilized to accommodate various bands and service personnel for the duration of the Edinburgh Military Tattoo, and on completion of the Tattoo the interior of the barracks was to be gutted so that they could be completely modernized. I mention this as we had another visit from the Barracks Warrant Officer to inform us that ‘Barrack Damages’ would be charged against any unit who caused any damage during their stay. The Drum Major soon ‘put this little man in the picture’ by telling him that as the barracks was going to be modernized after we left, he was talking nonsense. If any sort of charges were to be made they could send the bill to the City of Edinburgh as we were being employed by them for the Tattoo.

The food supplied in the barracks was very poor and I approached ‘Drummy’ to see if he had any objections to me starting a Sandwich Bar. He agreed that we needed something, so I could go ahead.

The business started with a dozen or so sandwiches being made up and sold, and by the time the Tattoo got into full swing, assisted by Peter Ogle, one of our buglers, every day we were selling sandwiches that were piled high on two six foot tables. This became a regular routine and we were doing very well.

After every performance of the Tattoo I got a lift back to Redford barracks by a Naval Regulating Petty Officer who had his car with him. I would put the kettles on and I was ready to serve tea and sandwiches by the time the other performers arrived back by bus. By the end of the Tattoo I was quite well off.

In Plymouth Barracks there were one or two people in the Buglers branch that played ‘bagpipes’. The most recent piper was none other than Reg Flook, who had been the Corporal Bugler at Lympstone, [my first draft]. He had taken a piping course at Sterling Castle and was now very proficient.

Before going to Edinburgh for the Tattoo I had thought about learning the bagpipes, but after that time spent in Scotland I changed my mind. Everyday whilst in barracks up there, individual ‘pipers’ would take themselves into every nook and cranny and they just didn’t ‘play the things.... They’ worshiped them’. That was enough for me and I still cringe when I hear them being played individually.

Not bad at a distance.... and the right distance is about from Cornwall to Edinburgh.

Soon after my promotion to Corporal Bugler it was confirmed that I would be joining the staff at the School of Music in the not too distant future so we started making arrangements for Bernice’s parents and family to move into our house while we were away from Plymouth.

Although I had joined the Royal Marines for a twelve year engagement from the age of 18 years, it was during this period in barracks that a scheme was introduced that allowed people on a twelve year engagement to change their terms of their service to seven years with the colours and five years in the reserve. Although at that time I didn't understand all the details of this change I joined the rest of the people around me, and changed the terms of my engagement.

Having been promoted to Corporal Bugler, I was very keen to learn all that was expected of someone of that rank and I was soon to have that chance. The reason I was not permitted to take the draft to Malta was because of my imminent promotion to Corporal, and I was soon informed that I was to be drafted to the Royal Marines School of Music as an Instructor.



CHAPTER EIGHT

RMSM DEAL

During February 1956 I joined the Instructional Staff of the Royal Marines School of Music, Deal. I had previously met the Bugle Major in charge of Buglers training, Bugle Major John Wagstaffe, when I was in Deal for my promotion courses.

He told me what I was expected to teach and said that he would not interfere in any way, but he would be available if I needed any sort of help. He also explained that from time to time he would

enter my practice room but I was to carry on as if he was not there. If he wanted to talk to me about my method of instruction he would wait until we were in the staff room and discuss anything that cropped up.

This was something I liked. At last I was teaching, and at the same time I was learning. There were six in my first class and I soon settled down teaching them Bugling, Drumming and the basic Rudiments of Music as required by Buglers.

I was warned by the other Instructors that I would be sent for by the Major in charge of 'Junior Wing' and asked what sporting activities I participated in, as Instructors were expected to assist in teaching the Juniors during the 'sports periods'.

Having been warned, when I was sent for and asked, I replied that I held a sailing certificate, could swim and play water polo. [Knowing that these activities were not on the list of things required.] The Major's retort to this was, "Typical Buglers activities".

So I was not required to give up my free time.

As promised, the Bugle Major did pay visits to my practice room and he only had one thing to 'talk to me about' and that was that I had not had my tunic done up to the neck, so that was soon rectified.

By this time the term 'Boy Bugler' had been dropped and was replaced by the title 'Junior Bugler'. The Bugle Major had been trying for quite a long time to improve the NCO structure of the Buglers Branch. He was on very good terms with the Major General of the area, and the number of NCOs within the branch was increased. Additional Sergeants were promoted and allocated to the Groups and Corporal Buglers were introduced to the RM Commando units, and some other establishments.

I visited the 'Married Quarters Office' and was soon allocated a property so that Bernice and Philip could move up to Deal. One of the properties offered was a very nice house in the Kingsdown area which boasted some very light and airy rooms facing the sea. When I told Bernice we had been offered a 'light house' she thought I meant a 'Lighthouse' and she was not very impressed. It was then that Bernice decided that she wanted to remain in Plymouth. She told me that she wanted to stay at work in Plymouth and that she was quite happy to let her mother look after Philip.

After a few months, one of the other Bugle Instructors was warned that he was in line for a draft to the Commander in Chief's Royal Marines Band in the Far East, The band was stationed in HMS Terror, the Naval Barracks in Singapore, and the appointment of the Corporal Bugler was as the Fleet Bugle Corporal. This was yet another appointment that had been instigated by John Wagstaffe.

The NCO nominated for this appointment didn't want to go so I volunteered to take his place, and this was agreed by the Drafting Office. I thought that a commission in the Far East was too good to miss.

It was a chance for a two and a half year married accompanied draft and I thought this would be ideal for Bernice, Philip and me. I discussed the forthcoming draft with Bernice and she agreed to come.

Whilst on weekend leave in Plymouth we went to the Royal Naval Hospital where I had the necessary inoculations and made arrangements for Bernice and Philip to have theirs when their travel arrangements had been approved.

I was really looking forward to my forthcoming draft as I remembered HMS Terror from my time on HMS Jamaica and I knew that a couple of years in Singapore with Bernice and Philip would really be worthwhile.

The arrangements for Bernice's parents to remain in our house were finalized and I returned to

Deal.

When the orders for my move came, there was trouble in the Suez Canal and married accompanied drafts to the Far East had been temporarily suspended, so I ended up travelling to Singapore without Bernice and Phillip.

CHAPTER NINE

HMS TERROR

Shortly after my arrival at HMS Terror on the 27th September 1956, married accompanied drafts were reintroduced. I visited the Married Quarters Office and I was allocated a brand new bungalow quite close to the Naval Base. I wrote to Bernice and asked her to make arrangements for her inoculations and to see about a flight out to join me.

I was accompanied to Singapore with one of my Buglers, George Castle, but the other one, Harry Gower was stopped from flying out with us as he was not up-to-date with his inoculations and he didn't join us until later.

As soon as I arrived in HMS Terror, the Band Corporal who lived in, asked me if I would take over the job as Welfare representative. I had not even unpacked my kit but I accepted the job.

As I was expecting to be joined by Bernice and Philip I bought a car. It was a Hillman Minx saloon and it was the first model with the gear change on the steering column.



My first Car 1956.

I bought it from a submariner who was living in Terror whilst his boat was in for refit. I had never driven before so I really started from scratch. I knew the basic principles of driving but then I had to put them into practice. I kept on stalling the engine trying to move off, so I was back to the previous owner to ask him what was wrong with the car. Of course there was nothing wrong with the car, it was just that I was trying to get away in 3rd gear, but I soon learnt to sort things out.

To obtain a provisional License I had to take the car into Singapore [accompanied with one of the band who held a full license] and the car was then tested and I was issued with a Provisional License.

I soon mastered the gears and as things were pretty lax in Terror I had plenty of time to improve my driving.

After quite sometime I received a reply from Bernice saying that she did not want to join me in Singapore. She wanted to stay at home with her mother and carry on with her job, but she would come out if I insisted but she really couldn't see any point in her doing so, as she had no interest whatsoever in leaving Plymouth.

I replied that I really did want her to come out to Singapore but that I would not force her to come. After yet further delays I received a letter saying that she would not be joining me. By this time I had rented the bungalow and was paying rent for it. I had arranged to purchase furniture and her letter left me in quite a state.

Now that I was to be out there on my own I cancelled the order for the furniture and was able to cancel the rent on the bungalow. I also reduced the duration of my commission in HMS Terror from two and a half years to eighteen months.

Within a very short time after my arrival at HMS Terror, I was introduced to my new boss, the Director of Music, Lieutenant 'Sid' Cooper. He had joined as a Boy Musician and had worked his way up to Commissioned Rank. He was a rambling man of about six foot four who called a spade a spade. He always gave newcomers to the band three pieces of advice.

1. Not to stay out in the sun for more than 'one minute' until you were used to the change in climate.
2. Never buy more than you could afford from the traders, as they would let you run up a massive bill.
3. Remember that if you saved a dollar you would be saving about two shillings, but if you spent a dollar, it would only be worth about one shilling.

Once I had unpacked my kit and completed my 'joining routine' I had a long talk with the Band Corporal who had asked me to take over as 'Welfare 'Rep.'

It appeared that there had been various differences of opinion to do with the running of the Welfare Committee and he just couldn't cope anymore. He told me about a few of the happenings and it appeared that the Commander, who was the President of the Welfare Committee just about ran the whole thing, instead of acting in an advisory capacity as he should be doing. I learnt quite a bit during our talk and it didn't take me long to figure out I had been dropped in the 'Deep End'. HMS Terror had an Olympic sized swimming Pool which was available to all non commissioned ranks and ratings.



The swimming pool at HMS Terror.

As Terror accommodated the ships companies of ships under going refit, the pool was always well used. There were continual inter ship water polo matches played and there were usually two or three water polo balls available for anyone to 'knock about' with.

On my first visit to the Swimming pool I asked the pool attendant for a water polo ball for a 'knock about' but was told he only had a 'match' ball as the others had burst and that the match ball couldn't be used. Asked why he had not got other balls from the Sports Store, he replied that the store man had said he was due for a 'Stock Take' and that he wasn't issuing any gear.

There are usually only two types of 'store men' in the service. One who would issue anything in his store in return for a signature and the other would be a one who seemed to think that everything in the store belonged to him and took great pride in having shelf upon shelf of neatly arranged items and was reluctant to issue anything to anyone. I thought this might be the case in question. I had been told about the lack of water polo balls at the pool so I took myself off to the sports store.

Sure enough, the store was a picture. Neatly stacked shelves with all sorts of sports equipment. I asked the store man, an old three badge Able Seaman, why the water polo balls had not been replaced at the pool and I got the same answer as the pool attendant. I told him I wanted a ball and that I would willingly sign for it, but he told me I couldn't have one until after the Stock Take. At that very moment who should appear but the Fleet Physical Training Officer. I introduced myself and explained who I was and the present situation. He immediately told the store man to issue me with two water polo balls, which he did with great reluctance. I then explained that I was to be the new Welfare rep. for the CinC's Band and asked if I could have a look around the store. He agreed, and we both had a chat and a good look around and parted on the best of terms. Needless to say, the same situation never arose again, as, whenever a ball became unusable, it was replaced the same day.

Before my first Welfare meeting I spoke to various other welfare committee members and got quite a picture of what had been happening in the past. I obtained a copy of the Rules Governing the Welfare Committee and did a lot of reading. It was not until I attended my first meeting that I

realized that a few of the other Welfare representatives were a shower of 'Yes Men'. It appeared that no matter what propositions were on the Agenda, if the Commander, who was the President of the committee, didn't agree with the proposition he would alter it to what he thought it should be. This didn't sit right with me so at my first meeting after the agenda had been completed the President asked if there was 'anything from the floor'. I stood up and said I would like to make a proposition. When it was agreed, I said,

"As it appears that some committee members have lost sight of the rules governing the Welfare Committee. I propose that the present committee be dissolved and that a new committee be elected by their 'parts of ship, in time for the next meeting by members who are conversant with, and are prepared to abide by the rules laid down for the Welfare Committee". My proposition was immediately seconded by one of the members who had previously explained to me what had been happening in the past.

I was not the 'flavour of the month'. The Commander then said, "I would like to make a proposition ..." and that was as far as he got as I stood up and said, "With all due respect Sir! You do not have the authority to make a proposition".

My proposition was carried.

I often wondered what, if anything, the Captain thought of that meeting as he was required to sign the minute book after each meeting. [How to make enemies in one easy lesson]

The following morning when Lt. Cooper arrived at the Band Office he greeted me with, "Good morning Tex, I heard you have been stirring the shit".

After I explained what happened he just said, "Good for you".

The following month there were a few new faces voted on the 'Welfare Committee'. Even the Commander had handed over the Chairmanship to Lieutenant Rickard RN who was HMS Terrors' Electrical Officer and Entertainment's Officer. This was due, we were told, as the Commander's other duties were taking so much of his time and he had therefore delegated the position of Chairman to one of his officers. The 'new' committee was welcomed by the new Chairman and all propositions were discussed as they were meant to be.

It was during my first month in Terror that I discovered that the Band Corporal who I had replaced on the Welfare committee was just about due for a 'breakdown'. He was very highly strung so I also ended up taking over as Corporal in Charge of the mess.

My job was that of the Fleet Bugle Corporal. I was responsible for the Buglers of the Far Eastern Fleet and it was up to me to ensure that they were of a satisfactory standard. Of course, I could only do that part of my job when the ships on which they were serving came to Singapore. As a Corporal Bugler together with my two Buglers we were an additional compliment to the Commander in Chief's Royal Marines Band. We were mainly based in HMS Terror but were required, on occasions to accompany the C in C when he visited various countries of the Far East. Sometimes these visits included the Band but on other occasions the requirement was for two buglers. These visits were usually on board HMS Alert a small naval vessel, locally known as 'The Admirals dispatch vessel'

After sometime, the wives of my buglers arrived in Singapore and that meant that they lived ashore in a hiring when not required for duty. All the married band members who were accompanied by their wives also lived ashore, so for them it was just like living at home.

Now that the Welfare committee was well and truly getting their act together, it was suggested that a dance be held in Singapore for the ships company. This would provide a social outing for all lower deck ranks, ratings and their wives. In order that there would be partners for the unaccompanied ranks and ratings, invitations were sent to the nurses at the British Military Hospital in Singapore and the WRAAF serving on the two RAF stations on the island. Being a member of the Dance committee I took a hand in organizing the event which was held in the Adelphi Hotel in Singapore, and the evening went off very well.

When it came time for a trip with the CinC. I had decided that that as I was unaccompanied I would go, taking one of the buglers with me. This worked out very well as George Castle nearly always

volunteered to come with me and we got on together very well. I'm afraid that my other Bugler did not fit in very well and to put it bluntly, he was a 'pain in the arse'.

The usual routine when just two of us went on a trip with the CinC was for us to join the 'Alert' an hour or two before she was due to sail; and after dropping off our kit on the mess deck, which always seem to be mess number one, which was situated right up forward of the ship, we would go to the bridge to sound off the calls required on leaving harbour.

When we were clear of the harbour we would be free of duties for a few hours so we always took over as 'Cooks of the Mess'.

We would turn off the 'fridge' and have a good clear out of all the things which had been allowed to accumulate. We would defrost and clean the fridge and put back items which we considered fit to eat. Then it was time to scrub the mess table and stools before scrubbing the actual deck.

After all that was done we would sort out the menu for the rest of the day.

On the Alert the messing was run on what was known as 'Canteen Messing'. This meant that a certain amount of money was allocated daily for each member of the mess. Food could be purchased from the 'Ships' Butcher, the 'Veg Store' and the canteen by the mess cooks, who would then prepare a meal and take it to the galley to be cooked. At meal times the cooks of the mess would collect the cooked food from the galley, plate it and serve it to the members of the mess.

In general, if a mess was careful what they ate it was possible to accrue 'mess savings', which would be distributed between the mess members at regular intervals. Whenever we joined the ship the remainder of the mess members would send up the cry, "There goes our mess savings". This was not strictly true as we would always budget the money due to the mess from the day we arrived on board and we made sure that we did not overspend. So it worked out that while we were on board, we would eat well but not run the mess into debt.

Sometimes we even saved money, as if the ship was in port and most of the mess members were going ashore we would make sure that there was only enough food prepared for those remaining on board. Admitted on a 'sea day' if we asked, "Is there anyone in the mess who doesn't like chicken?" They would all know that we were going to have Chicken and chips for a meal, and that meant a small chicken each.

Back in Terror it was discovered at a welfare meeting that the operator of the TBS [Terror Broadcasting System] was shortly due to return to UK and a replacement was required. After enquiries were made throughout Terror there were no volunteers so I stepped in.

The 'studio' held three turntables, a radio, a reel to reel tape recorder and a pile of records. Although the records were not the best in the world, there were some very interesting ones. The studio had not been used to its full advantage, but when I took over I intended to change things. I wrote to two weekend papers in England explaining that we had a broadcasting system in HMS Terror and that any requests for music could be presented on a Sunday on the same principal as 'Family favourites'. I got a good response and from then on I ran a weekly programme as requested by 'the folks back home'. Money was allocated each month for the purchase of records and I was soon making a monthly trip into Singapore to buy them. I used to buy the records from the very well known shop of Robinson's in Orchard Road. It was my routine to have a good look around the store as there was always something interesting to see. It was in that store that I first heard stereo on a reel to reel tape recorder. In later years I managed to buy a demonstration long playing record which contained all the same music I had heard in that store years before. After buying the records I would drive back to the Naval Base via the village of Nee Soon where I would usually have a drink and a meal.

It was on one of these occasions that I was joined at my table by one of the local prostitutes. She just asked if she could join me and sat down. Just after she sat down she was approached by a 'pongo' who was the worse for drink who said,

"How much for a short time", The girl told him to go away, but he continued 'mouthing off'.

I told him to 'Push off' in no uncertain manner, saying that the girl was with me.

He did push off and the girl thanked me.

I asked her why she did what she did and she explained that she had been brought up in a

convent until it was time for her to start work. She had been a telephone operator, but when she reached the age of eighteen and she was due for a rise in pay she was sacked. Her place would then be taken by a younger girl. There was no other work for her so the only way she could live was to sell her body.

She said she knew what she was, but that was no reason why she should have to put up with foul mouth drunks.

She asked me if I was a Navy boy as I was clean and tidy. Not like the Army boys who were all 'Smelly Feet' who would not even take off their socks when they went home with her. I told her I was in the Royal Marines and she replied that we were the same as Navy boys, always clean and tidy.

She said I was her friend and asked me to visit her home. I declined [HONEST] and she said as a friend she just wanted to return a favour and there would be no charge. I didn't go with her but after that I would often see her when I stopped at Nee Soon village on my way back to Terror. On occasions she would sit at my table and I would buy her a drink. If anyone approached her while she was sat with me she would tell them that she was with me and to go away.

During my tour in HMS Terror it was decided to hold an inter department Swimming Gala.

The Band managed to scrape a team together and we duly did our bit against the other departments. At the end of the final event it happened that the Chinese and our Band were equal 'First' so we shared the trophy.



Equal First with the Chinese, at the Terror gala.

On one occasion I was in Singapore with one of the band and when I started the car to return to Terror. I drove a little way and there was one hell of a noise from the back of the car and I thought the back of the car was about to fall off. I managed to stop right outside a garage, and although it was late I managed to raise the owner. I explained what had happened and arranged to leave the

car, on the understanding that I would phone him the next day to see what was wrong and to see if he could fix it. We then just managed to catch the last bus back to the Naval Base.

The next day I phoned the garage and was told that the differential box had gone and that it had been stripped down ready for repair.

When I mentioned this to our regular bus driver from Terror, Yusoff Ben Hassin, he just laughed and said there was no way that my car had been stripped for repair. I asked him if he could do the repair and he assured me he could and told me that it would be alright to tow it back to Terror, I had a word with one of the band who had a big Alvis car and we went into Singapore and towed my car back.

The garage owner was not very happy to see me attaching tow rope, but when I told him that he had lied to me about having stripped the car ready for repair and if he wanted to argue I would call the police. He left me to get on with what I was doing.

Anyway we got the car back to Terror and left it with Yusoff .

A few days later the whole of the Band embarked on HMS Alert for a trip with the C in C. Our first port of call was Hong Kong where the band left the Alert to spend Christmas ashore in Dockyard accommodation just inside the Dockyard Gate. This meant that we were only a few hundred yards away from 'Downtown' or 'Uptown' Hong Kong. It was very difficult to remain in our accommodation for very long as the sounds of the 'night life' of Hong Kong was very audible and things were so cheap that it was not unusual for members of the band to get out of bed, sometimes after midnight, get dressed, and wander ashore to join in the festivities.

Before actually leaving the Alert to live ashore over the Christmas period who should turn up to look after the cleanliness the ship but the very same 'side party' that we had on HMS Jamaica some five and a half years before. Gum Hee and Ah Fong greeted me like an old friend screeching "Sticks from the Jamaica, Sticks from the Jamaica". Of course they were both that much older and Gum Hee was now one of the 'Senior Girls'. But it was very nice to be remembered. I told her that we were going ashore to live in the Dockyard accommodation during the Christmas period and that we would be doing some shopping for Christmas decorations and tea, sugar and milk. She said she would visit us to buy whatever we required for our stay, as she could get a better price than we could ashore.

Once we had all settled into our Dockyard accommodation Gum Hee did pay us a visit and together with a couple of her girls, went into Hong Kong and bought all the decorations and supplies that we required.

While we were living ashore we were officially attached to HMS Tamar the local Naval Establishment. This meant that we were entitled to our daily issue of 'Rum'. As I was 'in charge of the mess' it was my job to collect the rum issue daily, as I did in Terror. Instead of the usual 'Grog' [One part rum, two parts water] while we were living ashore we were fortunate enough to be issued with 'neat' rum. Neat Navy rum is very strong and syrupy and was known to stick to the sides of the rum fanny. So it was the accepted practice to add one tot of water before it was issued. As the 'Rum Bo'sun' [He who collected the rum and issued it] I was traditionally offered a 'sip' of everyone's 'tot'. So by the time everyone had been issued with their tot it was possible for me to feel 'quite merry'. As it was coming up to Christmas we all decided that instead of drinking our tot daily, we would bottle it all for Christmas. This was completely illegal but no one was going to tell.

At that time there was an American aircraft carrier in Hong Kong and we were all invited on board by the Ships Naval Band. We were shown around and treated to a meal on board before listening to their band perform, and a good time was had by all.

We reciprocated by inviting their band to visit us over the Christmas in our accommodation. We had all paid into a Christmas fund and on Christmas Day our visitors arrived and helped us to demolish our 'goodies' which of course included the rum we had saved.



Our visit to the American Carrier in Hong Kong.



Hong Kong street scene 1956._

CHAPTER TEN

HMS TERROR CONTINUED



The San Pans in 'Happy Valley' on which people actually live.



Relaxing on the Alert in Hong Kong during the Fleet Regatta.

One of the reasons that the Commander in Chief went to Hong Kong on HMS Alert was for the annual Fleet Regatta. This was a time when inter ship competitions were held in all the different class boats used throughout the Fleet.

At the start of 1957 we re-joined the HMS Alert and headed for Manila in the Philippines. I can't remember exactly how long we stayed there but to make life a little more interesting during our stay we were invited to use the American USO club.

This club was run by a middle aged American lady, Miss Westerbrook. It was similar to a NAAFI club, but on a much grander scale. It was a place to relax, and during our visit a dance was held for the ships' company. Miss Westerbrook wanted to know if the 'Lambeth Walk' was still a popular dance. But even in 1957 it was a dance from the past. We introduced the 'Hokey Cockney' and it went down very well. [OK! I know it is now another dance of 'yester year', but remember, this was 1957.] As it was known that I was the Welfare rep. for the band, I had a hand in some of the organization. Having got on so well during our visit I was asked if I would like to come back to Manila for a holiday.

I knew that we were able to take up to two weeks local service leave so I said I would see what could be organized on my return to Singapore.

I was assured that I would be provided with local guides from the young ladies that worked in the USO Club and that I could be accommodated in the Club at a very inexpensive rate.

Whilst in Manila I was invited to a local fiesta, which was a great honour, as foreigners were not usually invited.

By this time, lower deck ranks and ratings were permitted to wear civilian clothes when proceeding ashore. So, transport arrived on the jetty and I was whisked off to Pandacan for a very enjoyable day out. The family I was invited to join really spoilt me and nothing was too much trouble. The young lady who actually invited me said she would be one of the people who would be showing me around when I came back for a holiday.

After our visit to the Philippines came to an end we sailed back to Hong Kong. The band disembarked from the Alert, as she was staying in Hong Kong for a refit, and we then embarked on a 'troopship' for our return to Singapore.

A troopship is not the most comfortable ship to sail on and to make matters worse, this one was being run by the Army.

Being at sea we were still entitled to our daily issue of 'Rum' and that is where a spot of trouble developed.

The officer in charge of issuing the rum was a young Army officer who was not conversant with the normal routine or procedure. He had the band formed-up in three ranks and started to instruct us as to what was going to happen. He said that each man would make his way to the 'Rum Tub' in turn, be issued with his rum, drink it immediately and then carry on.

Of course, this was not anything like the way we traditionally consumed our tot, as it was usual for it to be taken away and consumed over a period of time, giving 'sippers' and the like to those you owed favours. To a man we refused to accept his instructions and said that we would go without our rum.

This rather upset him and he told us to stay where we were and he sent for 'Sid' Cooper, our Director of Music.

When 'Sid' arrived the situation was explained to him and he agreed with us and told the 'young officer' that the tradition of issuing rum could not be changed without an instruction from the Admiralty, [which the young officer believed] and 'Sid' took over the rum issue and continued to do so for the remainder of our trip back to Singapore.

When we eventually arrived back in Terror I went over to the transport yard where my car was waiting for me.

Yusoff said that it had been repaired and that I could drive it away. Asked how much I owed him he said it was something like \$43 [Malayan] so when I gave him \$50 and told him to keep the change, he would not hear of it and insisted on giving me the change.

In addition to being our regular bus driver he was also a good friend to the band.

Having settled in, and back into the routine of things I decided to take a trip into Singapore. The car no longer had that terrible noise, but it did feel a little 'bouncy'. Anyway, I was well on my way

to Singapore then there was a loud bang and I stopped.

One of the tyres had gone 'Bang'. I put on the spare and drove to the nearest garage. Whilst I had a cold drink, I asked the mechanic to fit a new tyre and check the pressure on the rest. I could see what the mechanic was doing and when he fitted the air line to one of the tyres, the pressure zoomed up to around 60 lbs PSI. I immediately told the mechanic not to put so much air in and he said that he hadn't, and on checking, the other tyres all had pressures between 60/70 PSI. Eventually, all the tyres were deflated to the correct pressure and I carried on to Singapore. When I next saw Yusoff I asked him what pressure he had put in the tyres and he said he had just 'guessed'. When I told him what had happened, he just laughed.

As I now knew that Bernice was not going to join me, I sold the car, and carried on knowing that my tour of duty would allow me to return to UK within 18 months.
It was around this time when I was invited to use the Dockyard swimming pool.



Relaxing at the Dockyard Swimming Pool 1957.



Royal Marines Dance Band New Years Eve 1957

From time to time we were still required to accompany the C in C on his visits, and the last cruise I did with George Castle, on HMS Alert was to Cambodia and Thailand.

To get to Phnom Penh the Capital of Cambodia the ship had to travel several miles up a very shallow river. Besides being shallow, it was also quite narrow, so we took a pilot on board, and he really knew the river. We increased speed to keep the ship moving over the 'mudflats' but the natives who had houses on the riverbank were not very happy, as our speed created a wake that extended to the shore and on occasion breached the riverside properties.

There was nothing of real interest as far as I can remember as far as the country was concerned, but they did have an American Embassy there, and where they have an Embassy they have American Marines. As we had done on visits to other ports, we called into 'Marine House' and were made welcome.

They fitted George and I up with civilian clothes and off we went to the local 'Hot Spot'.

That was the first time I had seen a 'Strip Show'.

Nothing really to talk about, but it was a novelty to me at that time in my life. The other thing I remember about this particular visit was that a bottle of beer cost £1.00 and believe me, that was a lot of money in those days.

It was another one of those times when George and I were 'cooks of the mess' and we had checked how many of the mess members would be staying on board for supper. We were secured alongside and the evening meal had just been collected from the galley and was about to be served.

All of a sudden someone entered the mess and a voice boomed out, "Bloody Hell! Fish and Chips!"

This was from a civilian who stood staring at our food.

"Where are all the Bootnecks", he wanted to know.

We explained that the ship only carried two Buglers for the trip, and he then introduced himself as Charlie Bye a former Drill Sergeant, Royal Marines. George and I introduced ourselves and then Charlie wanted to know if he could have some 'fish and chips'. We managed to make-up another plate, and he joined us for supper. He then explained that he now worked for the Diplomatic Corps, and the purpose of his visit was to invite all the 'Royals' on board out for dinner on the following day. As I have said, we explained that we were the only two Royals on board and that we would be free of duties after sounding Sunset on the following day. He left the ship having had his fill and said he would come to collect us the next day.

After sunset the next day a large car pulled-up alongside the gangway and a woman got out and came on board. She asked for George and I, and explained that her husband Charlie would be delayed as he had been called away to the airport to meet a visiting Diplomat but would be joining us later.

We drove a few hundred yards along the sea front and stopped, and were told that this was where their flat was. So, we didn't have to travel far and we could still see the ship. When we entered the flat we were met by a few other British couples who were employed by various British companies who had interests in that area. It wasn't long before Charlie arrived and then we all made our way to 'China Town' where we were to have a real Chinese meal. I say that as the meal lasted some three hours and there were so many courses that I lost count. Beer flowed quite freely and after the meal we returned to the flat. As we were not required to return on board until the morning, we were invited to continue with the party and stay overnight.

As long as we were back on board in time for 'Colours' there would be no problem, and we actually just made it.

Our visit to Thailand was another memory that stays with me.

Of course, at the time of this visit, the country was still known as Siam and Fred and I went ashore sightseeing and to visit one of the very ornamented Temples.

We were dressed in full Number 6 dress, which was our tropical ceremonial uniform. This included the wearing of 'dresscords', and just about everywhere we went we were being saluted

by all the military personnel we encountered. Of course we didn't mind this, as every time we were saluted, we simply answered the salute. This didn't go down very well with the Naval Officers who were also ashore sightseeing, as they were ignored.

It was a real eye opener to see the real gold leaf adorning the domes of the temples and the treasures on display within. Especially when you realized that most of the people live in poverty. Still, this is the way of life in several countries of the world.

Whilst in HMS Terror, I was able to take advantage of the sailing facilities. There were several 14ft International dinghies that were available to anyone holding the required qualifications and I spent many a day sailing in the Jahore Straits.

I would take a boat away and sail down to one of the two RAF sailing clubs that existed on the shores of the 'Straits', secure the boat, have a meal in their club and sail back to Terror. Sometimes I would take one of the band with me, and other times I would sail down on my own.



Taking it easy sailing in the Jahore Straits.

When taking a boat away, it had to be back at the boathouse and unrigged by 'Sunset'. On one occasion when I was out sailing on my own I got caught up in a strong tide and a light wind so I was still a long way from the boathouse after dark.

When I eventually got back and unrigged. I telephoned the Guardroom, all ready with my 'tale of woe', to let them know I was back safely, but the Quartermaster on duty simply informed me that they didn't even know I had taken a boat out.

As I have previously mentioned. We worked a semi tropical routine in HMS Terror, so unless there was anything special on. Work ceased at lunchtime.

It was normal to 'rest' sometimes during the afternoon although quite a lot of sport was played,

and on most days I made my way

to the Dockyard swimming pool.

On one particular afternoon some of the Band from HMS Newcastle, who were visiting Singapore said that there was an inter department football 'knockout' competition being held, but they couldn't raise a team.

Unlike me, I roused myself and went around the Band Mess volunteering some of our band. It wasn't long before we had a full team and that included me.

Having made our way to the sports field we entered the competition and we won a position in the Final, but the members of the team from the Newcastle got a message from their ship that they had to return immediately, as the ship was sailing. Still, we showed willing and managed to do well for a 'scratch team'.

Oh Yes!, before we leave Singapore. I have just remembered, the holiday I had been invited to spend in Manila.

When we returned to Singapore after our trip, I confirmed that I could take two weeks local station leave. I made all the arrangements for a flight through the American Embassy in Singapore to 'Clark Field', the American Airfield in Manila and the last remaining thing I had to do, was to pay for and collect my flight tickets from the Embassy.

When I arrived at the Embassy I was told that the trip was 'off' as they could not allow me to enter the Philippines through Clark Field as there were no 'customs facilities there'. I was offered a trip to Hawaii, but as I didn't know anyone there, there was just no point, so that's one holiday that never happened.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

PLYMOUTH BARRACKS

When I landed in England I felt really cold. It was raining and coming from a hot climate I just couldn't get used to the change. People were dressed in dark clothes and everyone looked how I felt, miserable. I made my way to Paddington and caught a train to Plymouth and from the station I took a taxi home.

I was let into my house by Bernice's mother, as I didn't have a key to the front door. Asked where Bernice was, I was told she was at work.

As this little effort is 'Tex RM' I will not dwell any further on my marriage to Bernice, but enough to say that things didn't turn out and we were divorced.

In November of 1958 I changed my terms of service in the Royal Marines back to a twelve year engagement and received a gratuity of £75.00.

I bought a car with the money from someone in barracks, and this allowed us freedom of movement as a family. The car was a 1932 Riley Alpine. It had really seen better days but it served its purpose.

I also used it for trips to Lymington where the band often traveled to play on parade for the benefit of the recruits. That car could reach a top speed of 50 miles per hour, going down hill with a following wind.

Life in barracks became quite busy. With band engagements in various parts of the country and I again joined the Trumpet Fanfare Team. Our trumpet engagements usually consisted of performing at court assizes, and we also performed at film previews.

In 1960 instead of the rope tension drums that the Corps had used for centuries, a new rod tension drum was introduced. The shell was of plastic and the days of cleaning the old brass shells and blanching ropes was over. I first used them when the Plymouth Group Band and Drums went to America for five weeks to perform at the Madison Square Gardens, in New York. I think it was about this time that we were also issued with Silver bugles. Of course, they were not real silver, but plated, but did not require cleaning with metal polish, and certainly reduced the time spent on cleaning kit.

We were all accommodated on Governors Island, which was the headquarters of the 1st US Army.

Whilst in the States we traveled each day by ferry over to Manhattan, and then by coach to the 'The Garden'. Also performing were the 'Royal Corps of Signals White Helmets' Motor Cycle Display Team, A Guard of Honour from the Brigade of Guards, Royal Marines Commandos and a Gurkha Band.

We were there on the 4th of July, which of course is 'American Independence Day' and the Americans were making quite a noise about it being 'their day'.

On that day as the ferry arrived at Manhattan about 200 performers began to sing 'There'll Always Be an England', and it certainly brought some looks from our American allies.

The Gurkha Band marched at a very fast pace of 140 paces to the minute compared to our 120 paces to the minute, which is a good bit slower. When we had completed our display, we remained in the arena to play the Gurkhas on. They were also playing, and we all started off at their tempo of 140 paces to the minute. Of course we were stationary and then we would increase the tempo until the poor Gurkhas would

just about be running. It was not a very nice thing to do, but they took it in good part. Of course, it only happened once or twice.

We were there for five weeks and the time did not pass without tragedy. A part of the Commandos programme was for their commander, Captain Easterbrook, R.M. dressed in morning suit, complete with bowler hat, umbrella and briefcase, to launch himself off a platform some 80 foot above the floor of the arena onto the 'Deathslide', and slide down to the ground, being attached to the slide by means of a harness which was fitted around his waist, under his clothes, with a line running down a sleeve with a hook on the end which he attached to the wire.

One night he didn't attach the hook as he should have done, and he fell the 80 ft to the ground. For a few moments the audience thought it was some part of the show but very soon everyone realized what had happened. His body was removed quickly from the arena and the show continued in a very somber manner. It was discovered later that nearly every bone in his body was broken, and he died without regaining consciousness.

We found some of the American customs quite unacceptable. One in particular was the fact that the row of toilets which was part of our accommodation had no doors on them. Although the toilets were situated in a large room with wash basins, showers and urinals, it was not accepted that we would "sit on the throne" exposed to all and sundry. After a few choice words in the right direction, by 'Drummy' Knox, canvas screens were very soon erected.

The Band and Drums were accommodated on the 1st floor of a building, and on the ground floor there was a massive 'film library'. I got to know one of the civilians who worked in the library and one day he asked me if I would like to join him and his family for dinner one evening when we were not working. I said I would be pleased to, and we fixed a day. I joined him for the trip to his home and on our arrival I was introduced to his family.

At the table I was stared at by his young son who found my accent intriguing. He had never met anyone from England before, and I was told I sounded 'just like the people on the movies'.

I discovered that in addition to working in the film library, my host also had the job of 'Janitor' for the apartment block he lived in. In the cellar he had rigged out a small cinema, and after dinner we all took our places to watch the film 'Anna and the King of Siam'. The original of 'The King and I', which he had borrowed from the library.

After the film show it was decided that we would go out for a drink. We went to a bar where my host bought the first round of drinks. When I went to pay for the next round I was told to put my money away as it was the 'bartenders' round. When I queried this I was told that if the bartender didn't buy a round he would lose a lot of custom. So we carried on with our evening out, and I was returned to Governors Island much later.

One evening whilst at the Madison Square Gardens I was talking to an American couple. They said that they were enjoying the 'Exposition', and asked me what I thought of New York. Being me I asked them if they wanted an honest answer, or a diplomatic one. They pluggd for the honest answer so I told them I thought New York was bigger and dirtier than London and that I thought that the people were un-hospitable.

They then asked me if I was free after the show to go out with them. Having said I was, they took me to a 'Bunny Club'. These were the sort of clubs that one read about in American magazines, but to go to one was something else. All the waitresses were dressed in the 'Bunny Outfits' and I was told, "Look as much as you like, but Don't Touch". One had to be a member to buy drinks, so there was no problem there.

This was another of those situations where the buffet was laid out, on a 'help yourself' basis, and there were all sorts of wonderful things to choose from.

A very pleasant and late night out.

For our return to England we boarded a coach to take us to the Kennedy airport, and eventually we were already to take off when I discovered that I had left my wallet and a small pocket radio on the coach. I informed the steward and asked if I could go and check the coach, but I was told that the procedures for 'take off' had been completed and I could not leave the plane, but enquiries would be made once we had reached a certain height. In reply to the enquiries that were made, I

was told that although a wallet had been found it had been claimed by an American citizen. [I didn't believe them]. My wallet had contained addresses of American people I had befriended during our stay, and a much sought after American Silver Dollar, together with a lot of money I had saved which had been paid to all the British performers who had taken part in the displays for the previous five weeks. That money was meant to help pay for much needed repairs on the house, but of course, it was not to be.

I felt very despondent during our flight back to England and I was prepared to give a 'sob story' to any custom officials should they decided to charge me for any of the things I had brought. As it happened I was not required to pay anything on the things I brought home, but that didn't make me feel much better.

It was also in 1960 that the Plymouth Group Band and Drums went to Nigeria for their Independence Celebrations. We were there for about five weeks and were housed in Appa Barracks, just outside Lagos, the Capital.

We took a Royal Marines cook Colour Sergeant with us as we were required to prepare and cook our own meals, but shortly after our arrival he contracted some form of skin complaint and a substitute cook had to be found. This turned out to be the Bugle Major, 'Tex' Rickard, [not me but my name sake.]

He done a very good job, at least, no one seemed to suffer from his cooking.

When not actually working we were free to follow our own pursuits and they included visits to a near by beach, which was the sort you see advertised on holiday programmes.

One of the privileges afforded to us while we were there was the use of the Sergeants' Mess. This, I think was because the only British ranks serving in Appa Barracks at that time were Senior NCOs.

The Regimental Sergeant Major of the Barracks told us some weird and wonderful stories and one that stuck in my mind was the one about the Nigerian soldier that wanted to be promoted.

It appears that a certain Private had recently passed a promotion course and had asked the RSM if he could be promoted to Lance Corporal, but he had been told that the Regiment had its full quota of L/Cpls. Then one day this soldier came rushing up to the RSM in the Mess and was all excited and asked again if he could be promoted. Of course, the RSM told him the usual story that there was no vacancies to which the soldier replied to the effect that there was now, as L/Cpl Boggins had just driven his Land Rover into a telegraph pole and killed himself. [we were told, that under a very thin veneer of civilization quite a lot of the Nigerian soldiers were 'bush']

To explain 'bush'. On the day Nigeria celebrated its Independence, there were hundreds of Nigerians queuing outside the Banks expecting to be given large amounts of the new Nigerian money. This was not in exchange for any money they had, this was to be free! They also thought that once they were Independent, all the Europeans would leave Nigeria and all key jobs would be taken over by the locals.

Along with two others from Plymouth I was seconded to the Deal Band who were being sent to the cruiser HMS Nigeria which was sailing to Sierra Leone for their Independence Celebrations.

Prior to leaving Plymouth Barracks we were required to carry out our 'leaving routine' and this of course included a trip to the 'sickbay'.

When we said we were off to Sierra Leone, we were told we would require various inoculations.

Brian Peever, one of the other two seconded, hated 'jabs' more than anything else. Still, we had everything required and set off for Deal. Of course, on arrival we had to do a 'joining routine'.

When we arrived at the Deal sickbay, the Sick Berth Attendant noted we had been given our 'jabs' but then told us that the question of jabs had come up concerning the band going on HMS Nigeria and it had been decided that as we would be living on the ship for the duration of our stay out there, jabs would not be required. Brian Peever was not a 'Happy Bunny'.

We joined the ship and eventually arrived at Freetown. It really was hot and although we done everything that was expected of us, it was not a happy engagement.

One thing I did notice while we were there, was that Sierra Leone was using the same transport that was used in Nigeria for their Independence.

Shortly afterwards a drafting order came through from the Records Office in Portsmouth that I was to be drafted to the Royal Marines School of Music, Deal, as an Instructor.

CHAPTER TWELVE

BACK TO THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

So in July 1961 I returned to the School of Music as an Instructor. My immediate boss, the Bugle Major, was the same person who had been there on my previous tour there, John Wagstaffe.

Like most serving members in Deal I used to use the most popular café close to the barracks, the 'Strand Café', and as time passed I got to know the owners.

They were two 'brother-in-laws', Wally Strackan and Ezzard Halluma, both of foreign extract, but very nice people. As I got to know them better they asked me if I would like to work in the café after I finished work in barracks. I agreed, and after obtaining permission from barracks, working in the café became a regular feature of my life. As time went by I got to meet the rest of my employer's family, and we got on together very well.

Anyway, I ended up working in the Strand Café just about every evening. I was paid £1 a night and £1.50 [or One pound ten shillings as it was then] for Saturday nights. My first job in the evenings was to clean the kitchen, and depending on what had been done during the day, and by which brother, depended on how long it would take me. All hamburgers were 'homemade' and if that had been the task for the day, one brother would leave the kitchen quite clean and tidy, but the other one would leave one 'hell of a mess'. Still, after the kitchen had been sorted out the rest of the evening was spent in the café itself, as cooked meals were only served during the day. I was allowed to take anything I wanted to eat from the kitchen, except 'steak', but that still left quite a choice, if I felt hungry.

It was in the café that I met and got on very well with one of the musicians from barracks, Sid Sheard. He was a percussionist, but he was also a good laugh. He worked with me in the café some nights and on other nights there were one or two regular girls employed.

Once again I was called upon to perform with the Herald Trumpet Fanfare Team, and most of the engagements were for the judges at the Maidstone Assizes. I always seemed to attend these engagements, which usually consisted of two trumpeters, and as time went by, got to know quite a few people.

When we attended the Assizes at Maidstone our lunch was always provided. It was paid for, by the High Sheriff and all the arrangements were made by the Under Sheriff, who held that position even when a new Sheriff took over.

We were told from the very beginning that our meal would be the same as the Sheriff and his guests would be having, and the only difference would be that we would not be served with wine, but there would always be a bottle or two of beer for each of us. At our table, which was laid, under the stairs, outside the dining room, we were joined by the Judge's driver, after he had driven the Judge to his residence for lunch. We all got on very well together.

Part of my job as an Instructor, in addition to teaching Bugle, Drum and the rudiments of Music, [as required by Royal Marines Buglers] was to accompany my class when they went on 'seamanship training'. This training usually meant a trip to Portsmouth to join the training ship, HMS Bellerophon that was secured alongside a jetty. There, the boys would learn what life on board a ship was all about and be employed alongside naval ratings and generally get used to living on a ship. Sometimes this training could be arranged on a sea going ship, and that really

gave the lads a taste of 'life at sea', which has to be experienced to learn what it was all about. During 1962 I took my class to seamanship training. On this occasion we had been offered a place on HMS Wakeful, which was a small ship that carried a lot experimental equipment which was monitored by various scientists who lived on board. Having traveled to Portsmouth by train we eventually arrived on board the Wakeful to discover that we were going to Portugal. This was a real treat for the boys as we had expected to be stuck in Portsmouth Dockyard.

As the Wakeful didn't usually carry Royal Marines, and although I was only a Corporal,[which rated above a leading rate in the Royal Navy, simply because I was a Non Commissioned Officer] I was billeted in the Petty Officers Mess.

I was sent for by the Commander, who informed me that my class would be farmed out to different parts of ship whilst we were at sea but that when we reached Lisbon, where we were going to be for a week, he wanted a bugler on deck, to carry out bugling duties, starting with 'Colours' and remaining on deck until he had sounded off 'Sunset'.

I explained that that the boys were not proficient enough to sound off as individuals, and that the sole purpose of them being on board was for 'seamanship training'. He replied that he still wanted a Bugler dressed in his 'best blues' on deck each day and that the others would be employed in the various parts of ship. That it didn't matter if the bugler couldn't sound off calls as long as he formed part of the 'gangway staff'.

I suggested that the class as whole could sound off 'The Alert, General Salute and Carry on', for Colours ceremony each morning, but that was as far as their training had progressed.

I could see he really wanted to 'show off' to the local dignitaries but he couldn't have more than the boys could produce.

He said it was intended to hold various 'cocktail parties' whilst they were in Lisbon and he had been looking forward to bit of ceremonial.

I suggested that if he would accept that the boys would not be able to perform the usual ships bugle calls, I would be prepared to sound off 'Sunset' myself on the evenings when cocktail parties were held on board. He immediately agreed to this and said that as far as he was concerned, after the ceremony of Colours in the morning, I would not be required for any other duties until 'Sunset'. That was my free pass to a week off.

After Colours in the morning, I would collect some sandwiches from the galley, and take myself off ashore. Catch the electric train up the coast the Estoril, and spend the day on the beach. That was a very nice week for both the boys and myself.

On our return to Portsmouth we were waiting on the railway platform for our train to Deal, via London when a train pulled in and out jumped a Sergeant Drill Instructor who was stationed at Deal. When he saw me he came up and offered his congratulations. When I asked 'what for', he replied that my promotion to Sergeant Bugler had come through.

On my return to barracks, this was confirmed and within the next few days I saw the Commanding Officer and I was promoted to Sergeant Bugler.

I was then informed that as there was a shortage of accommodation available within barracks for Senior NCOs and that I would have to live ashore in Deal.

Supplied with a list of possible hiring's I eventually settled for a basement flat, just off the seafront and not too far from barracks. I was then living on what was known as L& RA. Which translated means Lodging and Ration Allowance. I received extra pay but I had to pay for my accommodation and buy my own food. I could use the dining room in the Sergeants Mess, and pay for all meals I had.

Of course, I was still working in the Strand Café during the evenings so food was not hard to come by.



Buglers House Staff and Juniors under training 1963.



Tony Dobbin and me at the Maidstone Assizes

Just around the corner from the Strand Café there was a dance hall, the Strand Palais. It was always very busy on a Saturday night and after the last dance most of the dancers would drop into the Strand Café for a hamburger and a coffee. This meant a very late night but there was always a full staff on Saturday nights so it wasn't too bad.

A number of the customers were regulars every Saturday and as it was so late, the last form of public transport had long since gone. One of the 'regulars' asked me one night if I would drive him to Dover after the café closed. This became a regular run for me on a Saturday night and I used to charge him £1.00 for the trip. When I had dropped him off I would then go and buy four gallons of petrol.

[five shillings, twenty five pence, a gallon in those days] and that would keep the car going until the following Saturday.

It was at about this time when Sheila came into my life.

A girlfriend of hers had suggested visiting the Strand Café as the guys who worked there were always good for a laugh. We got to know each other quite well, and we started going out steady. At that time Sheila was living with her married sister, Iris, in Deal and they both worked in the Deal Police Station as civilian employees.

Our friendship grew and I was invited to meet Sheila's mother who lived in Newcastle. Sheila was the youngest of five sisters, and with the exception of Iris, the other three lived in Newcastle. I never met Sheila's father as he had died before I met her.

On my first visit to Sheila's mother I was made very welcome and I was provided with one of the biggest meals I had ever seen. The plate set before me was piled high, but as I had always been a 'big eater' I managed to clear it. My meeting with 'Mum Hodgeson' went very well and I was introduced to the other three sisters.

My boss, the Bugle Major suddenly realized that I was still working in the Strand Café and suggested that as a SNCO I should leave the job, so that was the end of me working in the café, but I still used the café and kept in touch with the owners.

The social jump on promotion to Sergeant is the biggest one, one can make in the non commissioned ranks.

Life in the Sergeants' Mess is always full of events and happenings. Summer Balls, Winter Balls, formal and informal dinners and all sorts of activities.

Of course, to run these functions there has to be organization and various committees are formed. On my promotion I became a member of the entertainment's committee and one of my duties was to sell tickets to the members and guests on a Sunday evening when 'tombola' [bingo] was played in the mess.

One evening one of the guests kept whistling at me, [I assumed he wanted to buy some tickets] so I asked him if he had lost his dog. Later that evening the RSM [Regimental Sergeant Major and President of the Mess] told me to report to him, in his office the following morning at 9 o'clock. [This was known as 'the nine o'clock walk']

I was given a good telling off and told never to be rude to a guest in the mess. I 'respectfully' told the RSM that I was not 'a dog' to be whistled at, regardless who was doing the whistling and as one of his SNCO's, I thought he would agree. He admitted that he had not known the full story, but that I was to be more tactful in future.

As a member of the entertainment's committee I was asked if I would take over the job of 'Records member', which meant purchasing records, to the amount allocated each month, which were played on the mess's internal music system.

One Saturday I duly visited Ricemans Store in Deal to purchase my first lot of records for the month. I selected the records for the current month and I also asked for a lot more to be put aside for future purchases. I was asked if I would like to take the pile of records I had asked to be put aside with me, as they knew the Sergeants Mess was a 'good payer', and the records could be paid off month by the month. Being new to the job I decided to take only what I had paid for, and take some of the remainder each month.

That night, there was a fire, and Ricemans was burnt to the ground. All their records of orders and sales were destroyed and they appealed in the local paper the following week for anyone who had outstanding debts etc., to let them know, as they were unable to check on the accounts of any of their customers.

"I should have taken all the records".

By this time Sheila was my regular guest in the mess for the various social occasions and got to know all the members of the buglers training staff.

In the November of 1963, the same year that President Kennedy was assassinated, it had been decided that, accompanied with John Wagstaffe and his wife, Kath, we would venture to Spain on a camping holiday.

Sheila had never been abroad before and it really was a new adventure for her.

Well, we set off from Dover on the cross channel ferry and started our long drive to Spain. John and Kath in their car and Sheila and me in mine. Somewhere along the way in France, we parted company from John and Kath, as John drove the 'wrong way', up a one way street. We just kept going and as evening drew in we stopped at a camping site as we had previously arranged. We had not decided what camping site to stop at and it was by pure chance that we both happened to pick the same one. We didn't know this until I had just about finished pitching our tent, whilst Sheila was preparing our evening meal. It was just then that we were joined by John and Kath, so we were a foursome once again.

We decided to keep within sight of each other for the remainder of our journey to Spain and the next day we drove on to Andorra.

As you may, or may not know, Andorra lies between France and Spain and is a very mountainous country.

As we came to the end of our driving day, my car started 'playing-up'. It didn't like the very high ground we were driving on and the only way I could keep the engine running was to fully pull out

the choke. [no automatic choke on that old car]. Still, we all made it to the top of the hill/mountain, where there was a convenient hotel situated.

We booked accommodation for the night and then went into the restaurant and ordered a meal. Before the meal actually arrived, Sheila began to feel ill and had to retire. We all put it down to the fact that we were very high above sea level, and the air was very thin at that altitude.

By the following morning we were all refreshed and as the rest of our journey was going to be down hill we encountered no further problems.

The following evening we stopped in a valley, where we pitched camp once more, and although it had been very hot during the day, as night drew in, so it became bitterly cold, and we had to remain clothed and use all the bedding we had.

Once again the next day brought sunshine and all went well until our arrival at the camp site in Barcelona.

We then discovered that the site was full, and we were told that we could set up camp in the adjoining field. So that was what we did. We were still able to use all the facilities of the camp site, and we were very close to the beach, and all went well. John, who was a past master at camping suggested that we find, and use extra long stakes to peg our tents down as the ground was sandy and we shouldn't take any chances.

The day after we arrived we were joined by a family of John and Kath's friends so we had a triangular area made up with our cars and tents with a Union Flag flying in the centre.

After a few more days the wind started, and it began to rain. We enjoyed each others company and had a meal and a drink together. That night the rain and wind intensified, and during the night we were awoken by the cries and wailing of our immediate neighbours who had not used extra long stakes for their tents, which were now flying away, leaving their owners, tearing around trying to find them in the dark; whilst others were just sitting around crying.

The next morning several families left, but we remained for a few more days.

At the end of the week we decided to split up as we all wanted to try different camp sites.

Sheila and I ended up at another campsite further along the coast where we spent the remainder of our time in Spain.

An American family arrived soon after we had set up camp and they consisted of a young husband and wife, two little girls and a maid.

It wasn't long before we started talking and the American informed us that he was in the American Armed Forces stationed in France. By the amount of gear they had with them you would have thought they were staying for months, and it took ages for it all to be unloaded.

The poor little girls were dressed in denims. [long trousers and jackets] and they were really hot. Sheila and I were intrigued to watch the American set up a BBQ and start cooking hamburgers. He overcooked them until they were 'black' and then insisted that the girls eat them. The wife retired to the tent as soon as it was pitched and that's all she did. The maid was left to do all the cleaning, and the fella just sat around drinking.

He asked us if we were issued with vouchers to purchase petrol cheap in Spain, and when we said that they must only be for American servicemen he insisted that we have some of his as he had more than enough.

The next morning Sheila and I took off for the local market and by the time we returned to the campsite, the Americans had gone.

We enjoyed the rest of our holiday, used the vouchers we had been given, and in due course, drove back to Deal.

It was around this time that John Wagstaffe was doing all he could to increase the number of NCOs within the Buglers Branch and to ensure that in future, all Drum Majors were appointed from the Buglers Branch. He was on very friendly terms with the Corps Major General and he strived for better promotion within the branch. He had already achieved a lot by increasing the compliment of Bugle NCOs to the Commando units and all Commander in Chiefs Bands, which was how I had been appointed to HMS Terror. His next move was to have the 'Corps Bugle Major's appointment to be held by a Quartermaster Sergeant Major Bugler, to serve at the Royal Marines School of Music, in Deal, as at that time the most senior rank held in the Buglers Branch was that of Colour Sergeant.

Being I was fully qualified for the rank of Colour Sergeant I decided to go back to school to qualify for QMS. which I did.

I heard that there was likely to be an appointment of Drum Major to the band of the C in C Far East in the near future so I applied for a Drum Major's course. I really would have liked to return to HMS Terror.

I did the course and although I passed it, the President of the examining board, Lt. Col. Dunn, the Principal Director of Music, Royal Marines, added a footnote to his report saying that although I had passed the course, he would not recommend me to hold an appointment with a Staff Band. When the appointment was advertised, another Sergeant Bugler, who had previously passed a Drum Major's course, and who was also serving at Deal got the job.

In 1964 I was presented with my Long Service and Good Conduct Medal. [known as 'The Blue'] It was also warmly described by most servicemen as being presented for 'Fifteen years of undetected crime'. This carried with it a gratuity of £25.00. Strange, but for the life of me I just cannot remember who presented me with my 'Blue'. This medal joined the two I had received for service on HMS Jamaica during the Korean Conflict. One being the United Nations Medal and the other was the Korean Medal awarded by Britain.

While on the subject of Korea, I remember parading for the visit to Deal of the Royal Naval Commodore from Chatham. He turned out to be none other than our old Commander from the Jamaica, 'Billy' Beloe.

As he came to me he recognized the Korean Medals and asked me what ship I had served on. I told him I was one of his buglers on the Jamaica and we had a little chat before he moved on.

As I was no longer working in the Strand Café I was asked if I would like to run the bar on Saturday evenings in the Strand Palais dance hall, which was just outside the barracks and close to the Strand Café. So I took the job, and that kept me busy on Saturday nights and earned me extra cash. Although it was only one night a week, there was never a quiet period and the time flew by. The owners of the Palais had some of the most popular 'groups' of the day at Deal and they had booked 'The Beatles' some time previously, but now that they had become world famous, they knew that their little dance hall would not be big enough to hold the crowds, so they had to cancel the contract.

By this time Sheila and I were a regular couple and we got on famously. She knew all about my past, and I learnt quite a lot about her family. We made various trips up to Newcastle to see her family, and eventually her mother moved down to Deal to live.

In 1964 it was the three hundredth anniversary of the birth of the Corps of Royal Marines and there were lots of events taking place to celebrate.

Deal became overrun with hundreds of musicians who gathered for a 'massed bands' display and there were plenty of rehearsals taking place. It involved just about everyone in the School of Music, and Deal really came alive with various parades and displays.

Prior to all the bands massing in Deal we had our usual annual Major General's Inspection when everyone in the barracks was inspected at one time or another. I remember standing beside one of the other Sergeant Bugler Instructors and when he was asked how long he had been at Deal he simply replied, "Seventy two months sir". The Major General just said, "I see" and walked on. Think about it!!!! Seventy two months doesn't sound anything like Six Years, does it?

All the time I was at the School of Music, I made regular trips to the Maidstone Assizes to perform on the Herald Trumpets and as I have previously mentioned I got to know quite a few people there. On one occasion new caterers took over providing the lunch for the High Sheriff and his guests. As usual our table was laid, or should I say, there was a table with knives and forks laid out under the stairs outside the dining room. Whilst waiting for the Judge's driver to return from dropping off the Judge at his lodgings we were standing around when the new caterer came up and asked us if everything was alright. I said, "It was not, and that I would be speaking to the Under Sheriff, Mr. Dearing later".

Asked what I meant, I told the caterer that we had been coming to these assizes for years and that we were informed at the start that we would be having the same as the Sheriff and his guests, except that we would be drinking beer as opposed to wine. I said I don't suppose the Sheriff and

his guests would be having margarine in saucers on their table, and I expect they would be having table clothes, as opposed to a bare table.

He got the message right away, and by the time the Judge's driver had returned our table was laid as it should have been in the beginning and the margarine was replaced with butter in a proper butter dish.

Just to think, in addition to our service pay, we used to be paid for those trumpeting jobs.



David Buchanan and me at the Maidstone Assizes.



A Royal Marines Band on the march.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A NEW LIFE

The year 1965 brought another great change in my life, Sheila and I were married on the 16th June of that year. Although there was just over thirteen years difference in our ages we thought, that all things considered, we would be able to work things out.

Once again we didn't have any photographs taken of our wedding, although a friend of Sheila's took a video, but we were never given a copy.

Our reception was held in the Sergeants Mess and it was a very grand affair.

I had asked the Regimental Sergeant Major if the Junior NCO's of my branch could attend the reception in the Sergeants Mess, but he would not give his permission.

I was allocated a married quarter and we moved in and were quite content. We got on well with our neighbours and everything worked out fine.

Around that time John Wagstaffe, the Bugle Major, who had done so much to further promotion within the Buglers Branch, retired and he then took a job at the Duke of York's Military School at Dover. So although he had left the Corps, we were still able to keep in touch.

His replacement was Reg Flook, who I knew from years past.

He had been the Corporal Bugler at Lympstone, where I had my first draft after passing for duty as a Boy Bugler. He was a very pleasant person and things worked smoothly. He left the instructors to get on with their jobs, as we all knew what we were doing, and to be quite honest, Reg had never served in Deal before but he settled in very well.

It was somewhere around this time when I was sent for, and asked if I would like to be seconded to Ghana, together with a Royal Marines Director of Music. I was to form and run a Bugle and Drum Band. The D of M was a Lt. Taylor, who was going to organize a Military Band.

A provisional date was fixed for this deployment and the arrangement was to be that Lt. Taylor and I went out first, and then, when accommodation was arranged, our wives would follow. All went well with the arrangements, with the issue of tropical kit and the various injections, and then one day we were told that we would be seeing the 'Second in Command' of the Barracks the following day.

Not knowing what to expect we duly arrived outside the 2ic's office and we were both told, when the 2ic had told us what he had to say, we were to accept what he said, and ask no questions. When we stood in front of the 2ic he simply said, "Your trip to Ghana has been cancelled, and that is all I can tell you"

We were then marched out of his office and that was the end of that.

We were later informed that there had been a Military 'take over' in the country and that was that. Our services were no longer required.

By this time I had given up my Saturday night job in the Strand Palais and was able to spend more time at home.

I had owned a variety of cars up until this time and had learnt quite a bit about maintenance. I did most of my own repairs and as the cars worked, when I had finished, and there were no parts left over, I didn't do too bad.

One of the biggest jobs I did on a car around that time was to fit new 'oil rings' on a set of pistons, renew worn big and small ends and put it all back together again. I had achieved something, and I had also saved quite a bit of money by doing it all myself. All this work had been carried out, just in front of my married quarter, just using a jack and blocks to get under the car.

Deal, being situated right on the seafront, it was possible to go sailing, but unlike Plymouth or

Singapore, boats were kept on the beach and to sail they had to be manhandled over shingle down to the waters edge. Anyone who has studied the seafront at Deal will know that the sea runs rather fast at all times. This added further problems to taking a boat away.

Preparation was quite hard work as the boat had to be rigged on the beach and wooden 'runners' had to be placed under it as it was moved every few feet until it reached the water.

As I had not registered as being qualified to sail on my arrival in Deal, I could only 'crew' so I had to be satisfied to accompany a registered coxswain.

The only time I ventured to sail there was on a very windy day and as soon as we were clear of the beach, a gust of wind took us and in a very short space of time we were quite a distance out and the coxswain decided to cancel the sail and it took us longer to return to the beach and secure the boat than all the preparation it had taken for what must have been the shortest 'sail' in history.

After a while Sheila and I decided to buy our own house and so we ended up buying a house, four doors away from Sheila's sister Iris and her husband John.

The house was a semi detached property with three bedrooms and was centrally heated through a solid fuel boiler that was situated in the kitchen. That boiler would burn just about anything and it didn't take long to warm up the water.

On one occasion the air vent in front of the boiler was left open too long and the water in the system 'boiled' and there was steam coming out of the joints in the radiators.

The garden was 180 foot long and had not been cultivated for a long time. A lot of my spare time was spent working on that garden and also laying a concrete base for a garage.

I was helped with all the concreting by a musician friend of mine, Dave Varlow. Of course, the concrete had to be laid as soon as it was delivered in one of those 'ready mix' lorries, and the snag was that at the very time it had to be done, during a Christmas leave period, Dave and I were working the night shift at the Royal Mail sorting office in Dover. It took longer than we had anticipated and after slaving on a job like that for a very long time we only just managed to get to our 'night job' with minutes to spare. I wouldn't say we were very wide awake that night, but we managed.

The method of teaching in the Buglers Branch was still very amateurish and consisted of the use of a chalk board [blackboard] and a locally produced book containing the Bugle Calls used by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, known as a 'crotchet factory production', which a Royal Marines Bandmaster had produced in the Music Library within the School of Music.

We also had the use of a tape recorder which certainly helped, and 'overhead projectors' were just being introduced.

I was not very happy with the tools at our disposal and I set about writing a book that I hoped would contain all that was required for teaching a Junior Bugler. As I made some progress with this book I realized that it could also come in very handy if it could be used throughout the Corps as it could alter the problem that still faced the 'Corps of Drums' whenever there was a massed Bands, as there were always different versions of the drum parts being played.

Anyway, in my own time I just continued to work on my 'book'.

Having not been with us for very long Reg Flook came to retirement age and we had yet another Bugle Major. He came up from Portsmouth and I'm afraid to say I did not like him very much. He had never been involved in teaching Junior Buglers, and although he looked quite a fine figure strutting around with his silver mounted black cane, but when it came to teaching, he was bloody useless!

He was immediately christened 'Black Rod', but as far as being helpful to the Instructional Staff, or the branch in particular, it just didn't happen.

His one saving factor was that he didn't very often interfere.

It had been policy for years that the Instructional staff, taught the Junior Buglers, but they never performed with them.

The Bugle Major decided to change this.

A Corps of Drums from the Junior Wing was due to perform 'Mess Beatings', [drum beatings and bugling performed prior to and official Officers dinner].

I was told that together with the remainder of the instructors, that I would be required to perform with the Juniors for the forthcoming Mess Beatings.

I tried to explain that the instructors 'never' performed with the Juniors as this was to be their 'show piece', but the Bugle Major just wouldn't listen, and I was told, "Sgt. Rickards, you will do as you are told, and that's an order".

Until that very moment, all instructors had always been addressed by their Christian names, when out of hearing of Juniors, but from then on things changed.

The very next day there was an absence of all the Corporals and Lance Corporal Bugle Instructors when instructions were due to start. The Bugle Major wanted to know where they were.

He soon found out when a messenger arrived and told him he was required at the Junior Wing Office.

It appeared that all the NCO's previously mentioned, had all handed in request forms requesting to be drafted from Deal at the earliest opportunity.

Of course, if this had gone any further, the word would have spread throughout the Buglers Branch, and Deal would become a 'dirty word'.

Not very surprising, the forthcoming Mess Beatings were cancelled, and all Mess Beatings held for the remainder of the time I was at Deal were either performed by the buglers on the Depot Staff or solely by the Juniors under training.

All the requests for drafts had been withdrawn, and instructions continued as before.

The Bugle Major spent more time on the golf course, and all I can say about the remainder of my time with him was that 'we tolerated each other', although he was to have a final 'dig at me' later.

Soon after the mess beatings incident, I was sent for by the Director of Music Junior Wing, Captain Peter Sumner. He said that he had heard that I was in the process of writing a book and asked if he could see what I had written so far.

After he had seen what I had done he offered me a year off, to concentrate on my writing. When I agreed he asked me what I would need to further my efforts.

I requested a table lamp, a typewriter and the use of the typewriter that was housed in the Music library that could be used to write music. He agreed and suggested that I get in touch with the Bugle Majors in Plymouth and Portsmouth, and to inform them what I was doing and ask for any suggestions they might have. He also said he would arrange for me to visit the Corps Museum in Portsmouth where I could do some research.

My class was taken over by another instructor and I got cracking on the book.

I made my visits to Plymouth and Portsmouth and gained a lot of information and it was also agreed that in future, when a drum part was produced for a new march, the part would be forwarded to Deal so that it could be used by all, instead of each area producing their own part. I continued to work on the book daily and it soon began to take shape.

I was well into the year I had been given when I was sent for once again by the D of M, Junior Wing who said he was sorry but that he would like me to take a Sergeant Buglers promotion course through. As the Bugle Major had always done this in the past, I asked why the change in plan. I was given a 'certain kind of look' and told that he wanted me to take the course. So the book took second place for two or three weeks while I took the promotion course through. There were some old friends of mine from Plymouth on the course, and with Sheila's agreement, a couple of the lads used to visit us at home during the evenings for a little extra tuition. After we had finished our 'homework', Sheila used to provide us all with supper.

A part of the course was a written exam. The questions asked would be on the rudiments of music such as, What is a note, or what is a stave or anything to do with musical terms found in the rudiments book. One of the members on the course was a very good old friend of mine. He was 'Aba' [don't ask me why Aba] Faulkner. He was the finest Bugler I had ever heard. He could make the sounds that he produced on a Bugle sound so sweet that it was hard to believe what you were hearing. His only drawback was that he just couldn't remember the definition of the musical terms, and he used to get quite 'up tight' when the subject was brought up.

This was shown one day in barracks when we had just finished some bugling, and I was asking questions around the course. When I got to Aba I asked him ,

“What is music”. To which he replied,

“Music is the art of giving everyone the screaming shits”.

In the end he managed to learn all that was required and the whole course passed with flying colours.

After the course, I got back to the book that was coming along in leaps and bounds. But it was not to be for long.

Again I was sent for and told that I was to take over the senior class of Junior Buglers under instruction to get them ready for performing with the band on parade. This was another job that had been previously been undertaken by the Bugle Major, so without any further ado, full time work on the book stopped once again.

Every NCO and candidate for promotion had periodic confidential reports written by the Officer in Charge of them. Before being sent to the Pay and Records Office in Portsmouth, they are signed by the person concerned to confirm that they have seen them.

I had just received notice that I was to be drafted to HMS Ganges, a Royal Naval Juniors training establishment in Shotley. I was to be the replacement ‘Bugle Band Sergeant’.

Having informed Sheila of my imminent move it was agreed that she would join me and that we would let our house.

I rushed to finish the book and when I thought there was nothing more I could add, I handed it to Captain Peter Sumner who was going to edit it before arranging to have it printed.

I was sent for by the Major in charge of the Junior Wing who informed me that my confidential report had been sent back from Portsmouth as the numerical assessment did not ‘tally’ with the written report and that he had to alter it and send it off once again.

Captain Sumner, my immediate boss had produced the report but the Major was going to alter it. I was told that my report was going to be down graded and returned to Portsmouth. When I asked what I had done wrong to have my report down graded I was told. “Nothing, but you have been in a Junior establishment too long”.

When I said it was not within my power to draft myself and that I had applied for two drafts in the past, I was told that they had been ‘selective drafts’ to which I replied that all my drafts were selective, as a Sergeant Bugler.

He then repeated that I had been serving with ‘Juniors’ too long and now that I was shortly be going to HMS Ganges it would get me away from Junior training and the change should do me good. I said HMS Ganges is a Junior training establishment with over a thousand Juniors under training and there was no way I would be getting away from Juniors. He said the subject was closed and that the report would be sent. I told him I was not satisfied and that I wished to see the Commanding Officer. He told me that that was my prerogative and I was dismissed.

I was unable to contact Captain Sumner as he was away somewhere, and when I spoke to the Bugle Major, he just didn’t want to know and refused to speak on my behalf.

When I was waiting to see the CO, I was inspected by the Regimental Sergeant Major who asked me where the Bugle Major was. When I told him he would not be appearing, he asked why? And when I said he wouldn’t be saying anything on behalf, he simply replied, “What a ‘shit house’, fancy not standing up for your own staff”.

Anyway, I was marched into the CO’s office and I was allowed to state what had happened. I explained that it had been agreed that I had done nothing wrong, except that the OC Junior Wing considered I had been working with Juniors too long, that I had told him that I did not control my own drafting.

As I could see that no one was going to speak up for me, ‘I fired all my own guns’. I informed the CO what I had done during the past twelve months and said I did not think to be downgraded was fair as no one had found anything wrong with the work I had been doing.

The CO then said that I was lucky to be able to see my confidential reports, as officers reports were sent off without them being seen by the officer concerned. I expressed my view that that had nothing to do with my report and that I still believe that I was being unfairly treated. I was then told that as the Commanding Officer he had to ‘stand by’ what his officers had to say and that was the

end of the matter. I was then told to 'salute, about turn' and was marched out of the office. I wonder if it would have been the same story if I had played 'golf' with the OC Junior Wing?

As I have explained earlier, promotions within the Buglers Branch were few and far between and shortly after my episode with the Commanding Officer, there was a promotion within the Buglers Branch, to Colour Sergeant, but it went to an old friend of mine in Plymouth, 'Molly' Molloy. I wrote a letter congratulating him.

It was not too long after all this happened that I left Deal.
For the 'Wilds of Shotley.

I had been at Deal for quite some time. I consider I had learnt my job, and being the only person in the Buglers Branch who was qualified For QMS, I was once again in a unique position.

Whilst I was stationed at Deal I attended a course away from the unit.

This was an Advanced Command Course. It entailed visiting the Pay and Records Offices in Portsmouth. The aim of the course was to learn something about the organization of the Corps and to delve into the mysteries of pay, promotion and various other happenings effecting the Royal Marines.

A rather interesting thing that came to light on a visit to the section that held the service records of past serving members. It was there with the rest of the members of the course we were shown the record of a Marine Corbett, [Him of 'Step toe and Son' fame.] who was sentenced to 90 days detention for striking a Corporal Handley, prior to being dismissed from the Corps.

Until then I never knew that he had even served in the Royal Marines, and I don't suppose too many other people knew.

Another document we were shown was the enlistment details of an Italian who was recruited and who served as Lord Nelson's barber.

Another part of the course was held at one of the Royal Naval Establishments in the Portsmouth area and came under the heading of 'The Study of Modern Youth'.

We attended various lectures on the subject, and although it was primarily aimed at people who were about to be involved with teaching Juniors within the service, it was quite interesting.

One of the lectures was given by a professor who normally taught in Bath University. On completion of his lecture we were asked if we had any questions and various points were raised. When the session finished, the 'Duty Student', there was always a 'Duty Student', thanked the Professor for a very interesting lecture, and he replied, "Thank You! Gentlemen, it's such a change to speak to real men instead of these Academic Creatures, I have to talk to".

I have come across some 'clever people' in my time but I have found that 'clever people' do not always have the most essential ingredient in life, which simply goes under the heading of.....Common Sense.

I will close this chapter with a little prayer that I heard during my service career and have tried to uphold.

"Please God, help me to keep my big mouth shut until I know what I am talking about".

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

H.M.S.GANGES

So in July of 1967 I arrived at HMS Ganges. I had never served in a Royal Naval Junior training establishment before and it was certainly different from anywhere I had served in the past. There was a vast parade ground and at one end, there was a very high 'mast' the kind, which would have been seen on the sailing ships of old, but bigger.

The mast was the 'showpiece' of 'Ganges'. At various times during the year the ceremony of 'Mast Manning' would take place. It would entail dozens of trainees climbing the mast and the jutting spars, in slow time, accompanied by the Royal Marines Band playing music in Waltz time.

On the first beat of every bar of music the trainees would move one step so it was a very impressive spectacle to watch. The climax came when the 'Button Boy', stood on the 'button' [the small round button of wood on the very peak of the mast] and saluted. It was a much quicker action for the mast to be cleared. The band would play something very lively and the display would be completed when the Button Boy, who had slid to the ground on what is known nowadays as a 'deathslide', [A rope secured from a high point of the mast and the ground.] and presented himself in front of the VIP of the day who would present him with a silver crown. [a coin of yesteryear that was minted for special occasions.]

HMS Ganges carried a Royal Marines Band, with a Bandmaster in charge, [Bandmaster is a rank within the RMSM] together with RM Buglers who performed the bugling duties in Ganges and also performed with the band.

A Sergeant Bugler, assisted by a RM Bugler, who ran the Bugle and Drum band.

The main function of the bands was to play on the parade ground when all the trainees would be present. These parades were known as 'Divisions'.

Divisions, is also the name given to the different parts of a ship or establishment. On a ship it was straight forward, but in an establishment names were given to the different sections of accommodation. Usually these sections were named after famous admirals of the past.

'Divisions', is the Royal Navy's ceremonial, and it entails all the various sections parading, being inspected and then marching past the saluting base.

At Ganges the thousand plus trainees would line the edge of the parade ground. The Bugle Call 'Divisions' would be sounded off and on completion of the call, the mass of bodies would all double, [run] to their appointed place on the parade ground. [A very frightening experience, if you happened to be standing in the vicinity of the saluting base, and didn't know what was going to happen.]

Just to see a mass of humanity charging towards you, wondering if they were going to stop before they reached you.

The Royal Marines Band and the Bugle Band would be formed up in the centre of the parade alongside each other and each band would play consecutively as the trainees were inspected before they marched past the saluting base and off the parade ground. The bands would then advance, one at a time and march off the parade playing.

At Ganges, Divisions were usually performed twice a week. Once on a Tuesday and then on Sunday. This meant that the whole compliment of Juniors within HMS Ganges would be on parade.

On my arrival at HMS Ganges, I was shown around by the person I was relieving and introduced to various key personnel. I had a Band Store and a band practice room. The band members were from all the different Divisions and their numbers fluctuated between sixty and eighty. Of course, it was very unusual to have the full band for practice at any one time but there was always enough members attending to keep me, and my assistant busy.

Besides teaching the marches, we also had to ensure that the instruments were kept in good order. This by itself was a very demanding job. There was hardly a week went by without someone in the band reporting the loss of a drumstick or a bugle mouthpiece. This in turn involved a lot of paperwork, as to acquire replacement sticks etc., meant a signature on the necessary form by the person who had lost the item, followed by a trip to the Musical Instrument Store in Deal, by me for the replacements.

This caused a lot of concern when I first took over the band, as it would appear that in the past if someone lost something they would 'borrow' someone else's.

This was not a happy situation and the loss of bugle mouthpieces was a real pain. Mouthpieces should be attached to the bugle with a chain and as often as not when a trainee decided to take his mouthpiece out of his bugle more likely than not, the chain would be broken and this would lead to more mouthpieces going missing.

I was introduced to the Naval Officer who among other duties was the Band Officer. He was Lt. Commander [Joe] Spinks, RN. He had joined the Royal Navy as a lower deck rating and had worked his way up during World War Two. He had been a Petty Officer in 'Special Operations' during the War and I think that had earned him his Commission.

He was a big man, and having been a member of the lower deck [non commissioned] he knew all the answers. Any problems I had, that I couldn't sort out myself. He was sure to have a remedy.

When I asked my predecessor where I was to get the stationery I required, I was told that in the past it had been borrowed from the RM Band's supply. I wasn't very happy with this situation, so after my predecessor had left, I started taking myself around to the various departments, introducing myself and making enquiries as to the routine for acquiring the things I needed for the band.

In the Commander's Office I was given lists of stationery I could request monthly. One sheet contained items I could sign for, and another list contained what was known as 'consumable attractive'. Items that required the signature of a Commissioned Officer before they could be issued.

When I visited the main Naval Store, [just like Aladdin's cave] I was given more lists with the same proviso that I had in the Commander's office.

Going back to the problem I had with the loss of Bugle mouthpieces, I was not 'the flavour of the month' when I arrived at the Musical Instrument Store, in Deal for the first time. I was issued with all the mouthpieces that I had paperwork for, but was told that I had to do something to cut down such losses in future.

When I explained the problem to my boss, 'Joe' Spinks, he sorted it out by providing me with several lengths of chain, which was normally worn around the neck, and held a bosun's call [whistle used throughout the Royal Navy] I didn't ask where they came from, and he didn't tell me. Having cut off small lengths of chain, which were identical to the normal chain used on the bugle, I ensured that every bugle mouthpiece in the band was properly attached and told all concerned that there would be trouble if mouthpieces and chains went missing in future. As for the missing drumsticks, when the drummers discovered that they had to pay for replacements, there were not so many lost.

Having applied for a married quarter on my arrival at Ganges I was very soon offered a house a few hundred yards outside the establishment. and was taken around to view it with someone from the housing department. It was a very nice three bedroom terrace house, although it was in need of redecorating. I was assured that this would be done, one room at a time once I had accepted it and we had moved in, so on this understanding, I accepted the house and started making arrangements for Sheila to move up.

Our house in Deal was taken over as a 'hiring' by the housing department in barracks, and our first, [and last] occupant was a bugler on the RM Depot staff. I knew this lad and told him that if there was anything needed doing, to let me know and I would get it sorted out without any fuss or bother.

Sheila moved up to Shotley and we settled it quite nicely. She appreciated that the house needed

decorating but as we had been told that it was to be done soon Sheila was quite happy with the situation.

Although the band took a lot of my time, I still managed quite a bit of free time and Sheila and I started exploring the surrounding countryside. We lived in the area known as Shotley Gate, which was on a peninsula alongside the river Orwell. We just had to walk to the bottom of the hill near our house and we could quite easily see Harwich in one direction and Felixstowe in another. There was a post office at Shotley Gate, but that is all there was. The nearest village was Chelmondiston, and that was five miles away. There were a few shops there that included a fish and chip shop, but the nearest town was Ipswich, which was ten miles away. So it was ten miles to the nearest Railway station and real civilization. We used to take ourselves into Ipswich for our shopping and that's where we would head at weekends.

During the summer months, engagements were accepted for the band to perform at various functions in the surrounding counties. These usually took the form of marching through the streets as part of a procession, and if an event was taking place in a field the band would simply march in both quick and slow time. I soon found that to teach a sailor, [because that what they were] to 'slow march', was a near impossible job.

As Ganges was so far 'out in the sticks' and there was always plenty of activities taking place that required the trainees to travel away from the establishment and Ganges had a permanent contract for coaches to transport them. I know that I didn't have to arrange transport for the band other than inform the Commander's office what I required, where we were going and the times involved and it would turn up. Having a Bugler as an assistant was very useful as he was able to tell me the routine that had been worked in the past.

On the first engagement I was involved in, which was to be a street marching affair that would end in a field where various other activities would be taking place, I was asked by members of the band if they could then have some free time to wander around before returning to Ganges. After checking with the coach driver, it was agreed that we would leave the venue at six o'clock sharp. I informed the band that six o'clock meant six o'clock and that anyone not on the coach would have to report to the nearest police station, where some form of transport would be arranged for their return to Ganges, which they would have to pay for, and that they would be put on a charge for missing the coach.

On that first engagement, when six o'clock arrived I told the driver to get moving, and I was greeted with the news that there were a couple of the band missing. I told them I knew, and the coach started off. What the band didn't know was that I had seen a couple of the band, distinctive with their white caps, running for the coach. They caught us up as the coach was leaving the coach park and then they realized that I had not been joking when I said the coach would leave on time.

I never lost one member of the band on any of the subsequent engagements.

The Band Officer, who usually attended the engagements did not come on my first trip, and on our return to Ganges the lads in the band started to sing. Well, I thought, at least they are happy, but the songs they started singing were the sort that were sung in Naval canteens throughout the world, and were truly meant for singing in those places only. I asked my assistant if singing was usual and he said it was, so for that trip, I let it pass.

The next day when I saw the Band Officer, I was asked how the job had gone, and I assured him that all went well. I asked him about the singing on the way back to Ganges and he confirmed that they always sang on their way back. When I asked him if it was usual for them to sing Fleet Canteen songs he knew what I meant, and replied, never.

On the trip back to Ganges after the next engagement, the band started their Canteen songs once again. I stood up, got them to stop singing and told them they could save those sort of songs, until they were serving on ships of the fleet and were enjoying themselves in some fleet canteen. I

went on to tell them that there were hundreds of songs that they could sing, and that the canteen songs were off the menu with immediate effect.

There was silence for a while and then, starting from the back of the coach, very quietly, and gradually increasing in volume they all started singing "Onward Christian Soldiers". It ended with everyone having a good laugh, but that was the end of the dirty songs.

After we had been at Shotley for a few months, Sheila discovered that she was pregnant and she got fed up waiting for the house to be decorated. I had put in several requests in writing to the housing department but nothing had happened.

So, one morning I went to the housing department armed with a piece of paper and a pen and asked the female clerk if she would give me the dates of the requests I had submitted for my quarter to be painted as I needed them before I saw the Captain. She immediately disappeared into an inner office and returned moments later with the foreman of works. He wanted to know why I was going to see the Captain, but I told him he already knew, as it was he who had told me, when I was shown our quarter that it was to be painted in the near future. He told me that there had been one almighty slip up and that the house would be painted without delay,

When I went home that day after work I was greeted with the news that later that morning, whilst Sheila was holding a coffee morning with a few wives of our near neighbours, a man from the works department had called around to ask what colours she wanted the rooms painted. All hell had broken out as most of the houses occupied by the girls attending the coffee morning had been waiting for ages to have their quarters decorated.

Still, the following day a painter arrived and asked if he could leave all his paints and brushes in our shed overnight as he would be starting on the house next day.

Funny! I hadn't even requested to see the Captain.

My marriage to Sheila was working out very well and we were both enjoying life. Not that we were doing anything very exciting but we were getting along very well.

One day my boss, Lt Cdr Spinks [Joe] asked me if I would like a trip to Ostend.

I said he had other duties, and the main one was he was a Divisional Officer. This meant he was in overall command of several hundred trainees, who lived in a particular area of the establishment.

He was qualified in navigation and was preparing to take an MFV [motor fishing vessel] for a trip over to Ostend for the weekend with some of the trainees from his Division. It was to be a 'weekend' away, just as some people go camping, this was to be a trip across the Channel.

We left Shotley with about a dozen trainees, a couple of his Petty Officers and a cook on board and had a pleasant trip across the channel to Ostend. Most of the trainees wanted to go ashore once we had arrived, so 'Joe', the Petty Officers and I were left on board to enjoy the steaks that the cook prepared for us.

After we had eaten, we had a visit by a local wine merchant, who brought some wines, beers and spirits on board that 'Joe' had pre ordered for all the adults prior to leaving Shotley, and we had a pleasant evening on board.

The next day we spent wandering around, seeing the sights of Ostend, whilst the trainees were supervised by their Petty Officers, doing 'ship board' things before they were allowed ashore again. The following day we sailed back to Shotley where a customs officer came on board. The boat was 'cleared' so that the Petty Officers and the trainees could return to Ganges, then the Customs Officer stayed on board to sample some of the 'drink' that had been purchased.

It had been a very pleasant weekend, and I had learnt that 'Joe' had more than 'one string to his bow'.

Having now established myself in Ganges, I would make out a list of items I required from the various sources and I gradually built up a little store of all the necessary 'bits and pieces'. With about fifty silver bugles on charge I had a regular supply of Silvo and mutton cloths. One day I visited the Naval Store to see what they had that I could use to clean the emblazoned shells of the

drums.

As I explained to the Stores Petty Officer, in the past, someone had used floor polish, and it had built up a 'dull' surface that I had to clean off, and I required something rather special to keep the drums looking as they should.

He said he had a supply of 'Johnson's One Step Polish' that they held for the Captain's car and motor boat, and he would have a word with his 'chief', [the chief petty officer in charge of the store] so off he went and returned with the 'Chief'. He was a very pleasant man, and once things had been explained to him he agreed that my need was a genuine one, and told his petty officer to issue me with a tin of polish.

Whilst I was in the store I noticed a 'metal tool box' on the floor. I asked if it was possible to draw it on loan as it would come in handy for storing the 'bits and pieces' I used for maintaining the band gear, and I was told to take it. It had been returned to the store by someone, but it wasn't 'on charge'.

I still have that 'tool box' and it is still full of my 'bits and pieces'.

One engagement that came up for the band was a trip to RAF Bentwaters. This was the headquarters for an American Air Force unit, and they wanted a band to march around playing at Halloween time so their 'kids' could follow behind dressed in their Halloween costumes. The engagement was approved and we duly arrived at Bentwaters to be greeted by a Sergeant, who had organized things from his end. The band played as requested and they were then taken into

the Dining Hall where they were treated to all sorts of 'goodies'. I was taken into the NCO's Club, which was more like a nightclub, where I was entertained.

The organizing Sergeant, Ray Morgan was very interested in the band and asked if it would be possible for further visits. We got on together very well and he invited me together with Sheila to visit him and his family at home for a meal. He had accommodation near Ipswich and I was to contact him so that arrangements could be made.

In due course we visited Ray, his wife and daughter and spent a pleasant evening with them. The meal that was prepared for us was something 'different'. At that time we found it quite strange to have a cooked meal, and desert, all served on the same plate at the same time, but of course, since then I have discovered that Americans have several funny habits when it comes to eating.



Ray Morgan and I exchange gifts

I shall always remember one day at Ganges when, as soon as I arrived at the Main Gate on my way in to work I was told to report to the Commander, at the Wardroom, immediately. I duly informed one of the stewards that the Commander wanted to see me and he came back with the reply for me to wait at the door of the Wardroom until the Commander was ready. When he did emerge from the Wardroom, where I assume he had taken his time having his breakfast I received one of the biggest 'dressing downs' that I had ever received. He informed me that he did not expect to find 'his parade' littered with 'rubbish' left by the band.

I had taken the band on an engagement the previous day and as it was quite a distance to travel, the lads had each been issued with a packed meal. It appeared that one of the coach drivers had swept the remains of all the packed meals onto the parade ground before driving off, so yours truly got it in the neck.

When the Commander calmed down and stopped 'Blasting me' I asked if I could explain what had happened. I was told to report to his office where he would hear what I had to say. With the Commander seated behind his desk I was then allowed to explain what had happened. I explained that the band had been issued with packed meals to take with them on an engagement the previous day but when we had completed our part of the engagement I was asked if we could stop so the band could buy 'fish and chips'. The driver of the coach agreed, but said that they had to be eaten outside the coach as the following day he was driving on the continent and he didn't want his coach smelling of 'fish and chips'. This was agreed and the lads duly consumed their chips outside the coach.

Of course, it took quite some time for the band to be served, then the driver started to complain that we would be getting back to Ganges later than originally thought.

When we finally arrived back at Ganges I saw that there was quite a bit of rubbish around the coach and I told the driver I would have it all cleared up by members of the band, but he said it was alright as he was running late and he would sort it out. So I dismissed the band and went home.

The Commander asked me if I was sure that was what happened and I assured him what I had said

was the truth, and if he wished, it could be confirmed by my assistant, and about 50 members of the band who were present. I was dismissed and told not to let it happen again. I later heard, through one of the Commander's Office writers that the Commander had telephoned the coach company, and left strict instructions that on no account were any of their drivers to sweep rubbish onto his parade ground and that if it happened again, HMS Ganges would be changing coach companies.

Our first baby was due in early June of 1968 and now that our quarter had been decorated Sheila felt a little happier with the house.

My Bugle Band assistant was on leave when the baby was due and Sheila went into labour in the early hours of Monday the 3rd June, which was some sort of holiday, and the Band had an engagement. I had to take the band away as there was no one else available. Sheila was left in the hands of some of our neighbours and I left the house around mid morning.

I can't remember too much about the band engagement that day, but I can remember telling one of the female organizers at the

function that my wife was in labour and that the sooner I got home the better.

Before we started off for the return trip to Ganges, I was presented with a massive bouquet of flowers to take home for Sheila.

On my arrival home the baby had not been born and although Sheila wasn't feeling too bad, it was one hell of a day for her. I was detailed to make tea for everyone, as there were still neighbours in attendance and the midwife had everything under control.

Our daughter, Alison Jayne was born at about 10.45 pm that evening and I'm sure it was Sheila's, longest day, ever. So Alison is known as 'A Shotley Bug'.

Later during 1968 I received notification from the housing department in Deal that various things were required to be done to our house. I was not very happy about this, as I had told the Bugler who was occupying it to let me know when anything required doing and I would get it fixed. This, together with the fact that I was being charged, what was known as schedule 'D' tax on the house. [unearned income] by the Inland Revenue. It meant that we were not earning as much by letting our property as I thought we would. So we decided to cancel the letting and that Sheila would return to Deal. This was nothing like the situation I had when I was married to Bernice, and as I was able to make fairly frequent trips to Deal, and the fact that Sheila's sister only lived four doors away, we were both happy about the decision for Sheila to return to our own house.

Once Sheila had left Shotley, I moved into the Regulating Petty Officers Mess. Although the RPO's Mess was still generally a part of the Petty Officers Mess, but being that the RPO's Mess [Royal Naval Police Staff] it was a little more 'up market' and contained fewer members than the actual PO's Mess.

Whilst I was there it was decided that they would hold the first 'Formal Dinner' and to invite the Captain as the 'Guest of Honour'.

As it was known that I had attended Formal Dinners in the RM Sgt's Mess I was asked for a few 'tips' so they could get it right. It was only a case of good table manners with some traditional service etiquette, which included to take the Royal Toast seated, which is a custom only observed by the Royal Navy.

Of course, the 'old chestnut' was to inform everyone that when the Queen was toasted it was ONLY required to answer, "The Queen" and not "God Bless Her" as so many people seem to think they should reply.

That first dinner went off very well and the Captain entered into the way of things and ended up telling jokes and generally putting everyone at their ease.

As these dinners usually involve some five or six courses someone at the table asked the Captain how he managed to attend such functions without being uncomfortable around the waist. The Captain answered this by standing and showing all present that his cummerband was elasticated and would allow for expansion.

In January 1969 I was informed by the public address system one lunch time, to report to the Main gate for a Telegram. When I arrived at the main gate I was handed the telegram. Inside it simply said, "Congratulations Colour Sergeant", and was signed by an old friend of mine, Dave Buchanan, who was serving at Deal.

After lunch, when everyone had returned to work I went to the Commander's Office and asked the writer who worked there if he knew anything about my promotion, he said that there was something in the 'In Tray' but he didn't know what to do about it. I took the promotion order and went to find 'Joe' Spinks. He read it, Congratulated me, asked what I wanted him to do. I said I would have to see the Captain to have my promotion confirmed, and to be actually promoted, which he said he would arrange, and that I would like him to ring the Pay and Records Office at Portsmouth to see where I was to be drafted.

'Joe' said he wanted me to stay at Ganges, but I told him that they were not entitled to a C/Sgt. He agreed to phone, so we headed for the Commander's Office where he arranged for me to see the Captain on the following day, and then rang Portsmouth. He was informed that I was being appointed 'Bugle Major' to the Western Fleet,[a new appointment] and that I would be drafted to the Naval Barracks, HMS Pembroke, at Chatham in due course. I was to be dressed as a Colour Sergeant Bugler until such times as my Bugle Major's appointment had been officially announced.



Colour Sergeant Bugler 'Tex'.

The next day I saw the Captain and was promoted. I then made arrangements to drive to Deal to be issued with my new badges of rank and to get at least one suit 'Badged up'. I also contacted the Drum Major, of the Western Fleet Band at HMS Pembroke, another old friend of mine, Brian Peever, and confirmed that the Director of Music would be available to see me if I called in on my way to Deal the following day. I then discovered that the D of M was none other than my old boss from Junior Wing Deal, Capt. Peter Sumner.

The next day I stopped off at HMS Pembroke and met Capt. Sumner, he greeted me with, "Hello there 'Bugles'".

I said, "Not Yet" I still have to be officially appointed. He asked me the reason for my visit, and I said until I had phoned the previous day, I had not known who the D of M was at Pembroke, and I wanted to know if he wanted me as his Bugle Major. I was very pleased to be told by Captain Sumner that he had asked for me as his Bugle Major. As we had got on so well in the past I saw no problems ahead.

It was not long before my relief arrived at Ganges. It was one of the Bugle Instructors I had known at The School of Music, Brian Dunks.

Brian was known for his great interest in repairing cars and before I left Ganges, he had arranged for the use of an empty garage in Ganges, where he started 'car repairs' in his spare time, and his customers included some of the Naval Officers of Ganges, headed by the Commander.



On my appointment to Bugle Major

Whilst I was serving at Ganges, one of the Buglers in my band asked me if there was any way he could transfer to the Royal Marines as a Junior Bugler.

Of course, with so many buglers in the band I did not know the capabilities of individuals, so I asked him he thought he was good enough. After listening to him play I thought he had a good chance of transferring, and said I would have a word with the Director of Music, Junior Wing, the next time I went to Deal.

As a result of my enquiries the lad was given an audition, and a transfer was effected. That bugler, rose to be a Warrant Officer in the Buglers Branch and ended his service in the Corps as a Drum Major. On leaving the service Gary Powell became a policeman, and at present is serving in Exeter.

Shortly after my promotion to Colour Sergeant Bugler, my appointment of 'Bugle Major' came through together with the date I was required to join HMS Pembroke.

This meant another trip to Deal to be issued with the all the necessary items of kit, and to have all

my uniforms 'badged up' for my forthcoming appointment.

This was completed without delay and I was then able to show my relief around Ganges and warn him of the 'pitfalls' he might encounter.

Once I had been appointed, I dressed as a Bugle Major, and that brought some strange looks from the personnel in Ganges as they had never had 'one of those' in their midst before.

Although I was now entitled to move into the Chief Petty Officers Mess,

I elected to stay in the RPOs Mess, as it would save a lot of moving of kit etc.

Anyway, it wasn't very long before I left HMS Ganges for HMS Pembroke, the Naval Establishment in Chatham, Kent.

I think I was the first Bugle Major to serve in a Royal Naval Establishment.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

H.M.S.PEMBROKE

I joined HMS Pembroke on the 31st March 1969.

The set-up there was a large Royal Marines Band, which could be divided to allow a part of it to accompany the Flag Officer on board a ship for any tour he might do, with enough members left behind in Pembroke, to carry out other duties. There was the Director of Music, Captain Sumner, and a Staff Bandmaster, 'Jim' Beardman', either of which could take charge of the full Band, or part of it. On my staff I had a Sergeant Bugler, 'Paddy Weeks' who I had known for years, two Corporal Buglers, and a Corps of Drums, which consisted of eight to ten Buglers. The Drum Major, as I have mentioned before was Brian Peever, and his main daily function was that of 'Sgt. Major'. Of course, when the band performed as a 'marching band', Brian, the Drum Major, would be at the head, [swinging that big stick] and if the band was split, and were performing as two separate bands, at any one time, I took over as Drum Major for one of the sections.

My main job on this appointment was the responsibility of keeping the Buglers from the ships of the Western Fleet up to scratch, in addition to my own staff.

Not long after I arrived at HMS Pembroke, Captain Sumner told me that he had edited my book and it was now in the hands of the Ministry of Defense for printing

Sheila and I decided to apply for a Married Quarter whilst I was at Pembroke, and until we were allocated one, I commuted to Deal whenever I was able.

When we were allocated a Quarter it was a new three bedroom terraced house.

Sheila worked very hard to get the house as she wanted it, as although they had cleaning women in to give the place a 'once over' before the first occupiers moved in, it still needed a lot of work before it was anywhere near fit to live in.

Our next door neighbour was Brian Peever and his family; Beryl his wife, and two daughters. We got on very well together, and their girls were very good company for our Alison.

The estate we lived on was situated just outside HMS Pembroke, and I had access to the barracks by a side entrance, which was no more than 100 yards from our house.

After a while we decided to sell our house in Deal, as we did not know what my future would be, or where I would end up in the service.

So we put the house up for sale and it was eventually sold for a small profit.

Being a 'New Band' there was no set display for the Corps of Drums during a 'Beat Retreat' ceremony so that was one of the first things I had to do.

With the help of Paddy Weeks and my two Corporals we soon had something worked out, and we put a display together that could be improved, as required.

My buglers went to practice on a regular daily basis, Monday to Friday, and were taken by either Paddy Weeks or one of the Corporals, [I haven't mentioned their names as I just can't remember

them]. Remembering how John Wagstaffe had helped me on my arrival at the School of Music as an Instructor, I told all my staff that I would never interfere whilst they were taking practice, and that if I had anything to say about their technique, I would speak to them when we were on our own. I also told them that from time to time I would take all the Corps of Drums to practice, just to keep my hand in, and that I might join them with my bugle from time to time for 'a blow, to keep my lip in'.

Things went very well, both at work and at home. I had settled in to my new job, and Sheila was quite happy with her new found friends.

One of the jobs that the complete Band and Drums was called upon to do was a trip to Germany, to perform at the German equivalent of 'Navy Days'. Unfortunately, Captain Sumner was not with us for this trip as he had been rushed into hospital for an operation. His substitute for this venture was Lt. Graham Hoskings, who had been loaned from the RMSM.

I knew Graham from years past when we were both with the Plymouth Band.

He had started his career as a Junior Musician, and before the completion of his training, he had worked through the Junior promotion ranks to 'Junior Sergeant Major'. On his arrival at Plymouth in the rank of Musician he must have felt rather lost, as being the 'Junior Sergeant Major' at the RMSM, he had carried quite a lot of responsibility and a position of authority. Still, back to the story.

All the bands instruments and our personal kit was loaded into a pantechicon, [furniture van] and we were bussed to Dover. We then proceeded as foot passengers to Ostend on the cross channel ferry. On arrival at Ostend, our transport to take us to Kiel was waiting for us. It consisted of two buses, with wooden seats, [not very comfortable] complete with two German drivers. In convoy with the pantech. we traveled to our first stop which was the NATO headquarters in Belgium. This was eventually achieved after being lost a few times, having been misdirected by the Belgium locals, whom I assume did not take kindly to our German drivers. [the memories of World War Two still lingered.]

The band was required to play here before continuing our journey to Germany the following day. We were allowed to visit the vast 'Duty Free' store at the headquarters, but we were not allowed to purchase any of the 'goodies' as when Captain Sumner had made a visit before this actual engagement, he had said that we would not require the coupons required for any purchases. He was not the 'flavour of the month' when we discovered that.

The next day we continued our journey and eventually arrived at our destination.

We were housed in a German Naval Barracks and the accommodation was very good. The snag came on our first visit to the dining room for a meal, as we were offered the same type of food that the Germans ate and it was not welcomed by the majority of the band.

We had a car and driver provided for our use and I was very soon elected 'Mr. Fix It'. There were a couple of British warships in Kiel for the 'Navy Days' and I headed down to them and had a word with the Supply Officer on one of them. I explained the food problem we had encountered, and asked if he could help.

When I left the ship, my transport was loaded with enough Eggs, Bacon and other bits and pieces to keep the band happy for the duration of our stay.

The ship was unable to supply us with any 'Duty Free' cigarettes, but help in that direction was to come from another source.

On my return to our accommodation I was met by a Sergeant of the Royal Engineers. He was stationed at Kiel, and had dropped around to offer the facilities of their club that was not too far away.

It turned out that their 'Club' had burnt down six weeks previously, but it had been re-built and was now open for business.

When I asked about acquiring any Duty Free goods he assured me that there would be no problem, as there was a NAAFI quite close and if I compiled a list of everything we wanted he would arrange for me to collect anything required.

Having later been supplied with a price list I was escorted to the NAAFI where, I discovered that the German manager was the wife of the Sergeant who had arranged my visit. I had collected the

money required for all the purchases, and I returned to our accommodation a very popular person. Before leaving the NAAFI, a bottle of champagne had been opened, as a gift for spending so much money, and all I can say was, that it was a good job I was not driving.

We were one of three bands involved in the concerts that were held in a great hall in Kiel, and after each band had performed, the massed bands struck up with the march 'Old Comrades'. The other bands consisted of a small American Air Force Band and a very large German Naval Band. Their band also carried a team of Trumpeters and they played a few very stirring Marches which we immediately associated with the type of music that was played during the rise of the German High Command during World War Two. Still, it was a very good concert and I spent quite some time recording as much of it as I could on an old reel to reel recorder. Of course, over the years the tape that I had recorded has been lost.

Not having enjoyed our road trip to Kiel, sitting on wooden slatted seats in our coaches, we were not looking forward to our return trip to Ostend. It was then discovered that, during a cocktail party in the Officers Mess, Graham Hoskings had arranged for the Band to return to England by air, and we flew back in two German Luftwaffe planes.

Road transport was arranged to return us to Pembroke once we landed, and we heard through the 'grapevine' later that Graham Hoskings had been reprimanded for arranging our flight home.

Another engagement we were involved with was a trip to Holland. That by itself was unusual, but the travel arrangements was even more unusual. The 'powers to be' took a Royal Naval ship out of 'Reserve' and manned it with a skeleton crew. The ship was dispatched to Dover where our band, together with various other service units were embarked for the trip to Holland. On our arrival, we were housed in a Dutch Army Barracks.

The barracks was empty of Dutch military personnel, as we discovered that their Army only worked from Monday to Friday, and we were there for the weekend. To make life a little sweeter, our band was accommodated in the Officers quarters and that did not go down very well with some of the officers who were present with some of the other units, who were accommodated in lesser luxurious billets. It was also quite strange to see the same officers trying to get themselves into hammocks on board our seaborne transport.

Sheila and I were very happy, and I really settled in well in my job as the Bugle Major. Around the latter part of 1969 Sheila informed me that she was pregnant again and we both looked forward to the arrival of our next child.

The band went away on various jobs, and one that upset all the Senior NCO's was when we were required to stay at a Royal Air Force Station, where we were to perform.

When we arrived, we discovered that all the Musicians and Junior NCO's [Corporals and below] had been allocated cabins for two people, and all the SNCO's were to be accommodated in a barrack room.

Brian Peever [the Drum Major] and I went to see the Station Warrant Officer to sort things out but he said nothing could be done, and it had been thought that all the SNCO's wouldn't mind being in the same room. Asked, how many of his SNCO's lived in a barrack room, he had to admit that they were all accommodated in cabins. He then offered Brian and me a cabin, but we refused out of principle, and stayed with the rest of our SNCO's.

That was not the end of our problems at that station as we were told that we would be charged 'mess fees' for the duration of our stay, as we had the use of the mess and all the facilities. This was disproved the following morning when we went for breakfast to find that there were no daily papers available. We then discovered that the RAF SNCO's who were not actually reading papers, were 'sitting on them'. This did not go down at all well with us and we made our representations to the Station Warrant Officer when he came into the mess, and told him we would not be paying mess fees, as we were already paying our fees to our own messes at Pembroke and not to expect our band to visit his station again. Our boss agreed with us when he was told of the happenings, and from then on I was appointed 'Mr. Fix it' for all future engagements in this country.

I would travel, by car, to our intended destination and made sure that the accommodation,

feeding, and all other arrangements were as they should be, and then telephone the D of M., or the Drum Major, to confirm that all was in order.

This came in very handy, as it meant that I had the use of my car, for which I was paid mileage allowance, and that all the arrangements for the band's intended visit were as they should be.

There was one occasion when I wished to see the Station Warrant Officer where we were due to stay, when he made it known through his subordinates that he was too busy to see me. As luck would have it. I saw the Adjutant of the unit who asked me," What time will the band be arriving tomorrow".



Bugle Major 'Tex' on promotion to Quartermaster Sergeant Bugler.

When I told him that as I was unable to speak to the Station Warrant Officer, to confirm that all the arrangements for our stay were in order I would not be able to phone the confirmation back to the Director of Music and the Band would not be coming.

He soon sorted out an appointment for me with the person concerned and we were able to sort things out without any further delay.

Exactly six months after my promotion to Colour Sergeant, I received my promotion to Quartermaster Sergeant. Which immediately made me the Senior Bugle Major in the Royal Marines.

Normally I would have been appointed as the 'Corps Bugle Major', at Deal, but as my appointment to Pembroke had been made only a short time ago, and the powers to be wanted me to remain where I was, it was not on the cards for me to be drafted to Deal. This meant that the then Bugle Major in Deal, Tony Ormonde-Dobbin, could not be appointed the 'Corps Bugle Major'.

This situation only caused one problem as far as I was concerned. When there was to be a 'Massed Bands' parade on Horse Guards parade in London, rehearsals for this event were to be held in Deal and my boss asked me if I would be prepared to travel to Deal and be 'second in command' to the Bugle Major at Deal for the training of the 'Massed Corps of Drums' for the forthcoming event.

As I was senior to Tony Dobbin, I said that I would not be prepared to adhere to his suggestion. He asked what I suggested under the circumstances, and I said I was quite prepared to remain in Pembroke while the band was away, to look after the phone calls that might come in, and arrange any future engagements, after consulting with him.

So it was, that I held the fort, so to speak, while the band went to Deal and London.

Although, I was now a QMS, it had been decided in the days of John Wagstaffe, that the badge for a Bugle Major appointed in the Royal Marines would remain the same, although in the British Army, a QMS, or later, a Warrant Officer, with the appointment of Bugle Major or Drum Major, would wear a crown above their normal badge of appointment.

So life progressed, and as far as I knew, everyone was quite happy.

Going back to the days when I was promoted Sergeant, and was on the entertainment Committee in Deal. One of the guests who used to frequent the mess on a Sunday evening was the Trumpet Major, from the Junior Leaders Regiment, Royal Engineers from Dover, 'Dinger' Bell. I got to know him quite

well and this was to change my life in the future.

Back to the story. Just at the rear of HMS Pembroke, there was the Royal Engineers Barracks, where one of the two Royal Engineers bands was stationed.

The band librarian of their band and our band librarian were on very good terms and we used to see quite a lot of their librarian. In time I got to know him quite well. During one of his visits to Pembroke he mentioned that 'Dinger Bell' was retiring in the near future and he thought that the position of Trumpet Major of the Junior Leaders Regiment in Dover would suit me.



The finale of a band display in Chatham.

With this in mind, and knowing that my engagement in the Royal Marines would be terminating in just under twelve months time, on attaining the age of forty, I talked it over with Sheila and we agreed that I should make enquiries about the job.

Knowing that the Trumpet Major was, on paper, on the strength of the RE Band Chatham, and having read the manual of Military Law, and ascertained that a transfer could be possible, I wrote to the Director of Music, of the Chatham Royal Engineers Band, stating that I knew that Trumpet Major Bell was retiring in the near future and asked if there was any possibility of me being considered for the position when it became vacant. The next thing I heard was a phone call from 'Dinger Bell' in Dover, saying that his Commanding Officer had received my letter, which had been forwarded by the D of M. Chatham, and that as the 'sun seems to shine from my lower regions', would I come down to Dover to see the Commanding Officer.

At this point I informed Captain Sumner what I was doing and he agreed that as my career in the Royal Marines would come to an end when I reached the age of 40, I was doing the best thing possible.

I took the trip to Dover, and it happened to be at a time when the Regiment was rehearsing for the prize giving presentations at the end of term.

Dinger Bell was away, engaged on his pre-release programme, and I was introduced to the Adjutant of the Regiment, who was also the Band President, Captain Daniels.

He then took me into the Commanding Officers office where I had a good 'chat' with the CO Lt. Col. Julius, RE.

We then made our way over to one of the gymnasiums, where rehearsals were taking place for the prize giving.

The Regiment's Trumpeters marched on and played a fanfare which was to introduce the prize giving and, to be quite honest, it was not up to much.

I was asked if I could do anything to improve matters and I agreed to try.

I took the trumpeters away and introduced myself. I then took them through their routine little by little.

This covered, marching on, bringing their trumpets to the playing position, and then sounding off with confidence. After a few rehearsals well away from the GYM, that was being used for the prize giving, we returned and the trumpet team performed, very much improved, to my credit.

The Commanding Officer said he would welcome me as his next Trumpet Major, and would I take the necessary action to effect my transfer to the Royal Engineers.

On my return to Pembroke I started the ball rolling for my transfer, and in due course I was informed that the transfer could go ahead and that I could transfer as a 'Paid Acting Sergeant'.

Not knowing what this meant, as there was no such thing as a paid acting Sergeant in the Royal Marines, I telephoned the Adjutant of the Junior Leaders Regiment, and asked what my position would be if I effected the transfer. Captain Daniels said he would contact their Records Office and ring me back. A little later he phoned me back and I was told that, "if I transferred, and proved satisfactory, within 34 days, my promotion to Sgt. would be confirmed and that with the recommendation of the Commanding Officer, I would be promoted up to my present equivalent rank, which would be 'Warrant Officer Class Two'".

With this understanding, although I was not too happy about dropping two ranks, I started the wheels turning in order to actually transfer to the Royal Engineers.



My last day in the Royal Marines, 30th April 1970.

I hope you have found some pleasure reading my little effort. I make no excuses for the content, spelling, set out or anything I have written,

“IF YOU CAN’T STAND A JOKE, YOU SHOULDN’T HAVE JOINED!”

Epilogue

This effort is an edited excerpt of the book I have written for the benefit mainly of my family. “The Life and Times of Peter Gerald Rickards”.

Oh Yes! The book I wrote whilst serving was published in 1971 by the Ministry of Defence as an official ‘Book of Reference’ BR 13 THE BUGLER’S HANDBOOK.

