



**Major Paul Burnham OCRM
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Royal Marines Reserve (RMR) – Birmingham Detachment

Overview

Birmingham Detachment is the southern-most command within RMR and is located at HMS Forward in the heart of Birmingham, a purpose built building that is also shared with the Royal Navy Reserve.

The Royal Marines consists of some 8000 trained Commando's with the Birmingham Detachment being formed in 1957 and currently consisting of 32 trained ranks, 8 recruits and 16 potential recruits held within a 'Holding Troop' entitled 'Zeebrugge Troop'.

The Detachment is commanded by Major Paul Burnham with Colour Sergeant Wayne Sanderson as his Unit Sergeant Major. The detachment comprises of ranks that come from all walks of life from the West Midlands Fire Service, local council, West Midlands Police, builders, engineers, doctors, office workers and many other occupations.

The Birmingham Detachment specializes in Heavy Machine Guns (HMG) and runs regular training exercises in this specialism in addition to the more generic Royal Marine Commando training that its ranks participate in. Recently, Marines have deployed to North, Central & South America, Middle East, Far East, UK Customs and Immigration Border Security and Norway amongst other places on Deployment and training exercises.

The Birmingham Detachment has supplied ranks to both Iraq and Afghanistan in support of the regular Royal Marine Corps with over 64 independent deployments (Appendix 1). These deployments have been as part of an amalgamation of personnel within a commando unit and also as a stand alone RMR troop providing force protection to the Royal Navy and Royal Marine Iraqi training team within southern Iraq. Since 2003, 64 ranks have deployed from Birmingham Detachment, notably with 1 rank receiving the George Cross, L/Cpl Matt CROUCHER and 1 rank sadly being killed in action, Mne Jon CROOKES. Ranks have also deployed to support homeland security such as UK Customs and Immigration Border Security

Personalities

Three notable and significant Birmingham born Royal Marines are:

Norman Augustus Finch VC MSM (26 December 1890 – 15 March 1966) was a Sergeant in the Royal Marines who was an English recipient of the Victoria Cross, the highest and most prestigious award for gallantry in the face of the enemy that can be awarded to British and Commonwealth forces.

Finch was born 26 December 1890 in Birmingham. He signed on to the Royal Marines in January 1908 and received basic training at Eastney. For the next four years he served on various ships and shore stations and in June 1913 was promoted to Bombardier and this was soon followed by further rises to Corporal in 1915 and Sergeant in 1917. He joined the 4th Battalion on 23 March 1918.

He was 27 years old, and a sergeant in the Royal Marine Artillery, Royal Marines during the First World War when the following deed took place for which he was awarded the VC.

On 22/23 April 1918 at Zeebrugge, Belgium, Sergeant Finch was second in command of the pom-poms and Lewis gun in the foretop of HMS Vindictive. At one period Vindictive was being hit every few seconds, but Sergeant Finch and the officer in command kept up a continuous fire, until two heavy shells made direct hits on the foretop killing or disabling everyone except Sergeant Finch who was, however, severely wounded. Nevertheless he remained in his battered and exposed position, harassing the enemy on the Mole until the foretop received another direct hit, putting the remainder of the armament completely out of action. His award was by virtue of ballot.

He retired with the rank of Quartermaster Sergeant in December 1929. World War II brought Quartermaster Finch back to the Portsmouth Division in 1938. He appears to have spent most of the war as Quarter Master, serving as a Storekeeper Officer (Lieutenant) at 104 (Training) RM Brigade, R.M. Training Group Dalditch, then Devon. On 15 August 1945 he was released from service and in 1964 was made Divisional Sergeant-Major of HM Bodyguard of the Yeoman of the Guard. He died 15 March 1966.

Lance Corporal Matt CROUCHER GC: A Birmingham born Royal Marine Commando and Birmingham Detachment Royal Marine Reservist was awarded the George Cross medal for throwing himself on a Taliban tripwire grenade to save his comrades. He was part of a reconnaissance mission near Sangin in Helmand Province in Afghanistan on 9 February 2008. Moving through a compound at night he felt a trip-wire against his leg and saw that he had activated a grenade. He threw himself to the ground, and used his rucksack to pin the grenade to the floor, and tucked his legs up to his body. He was thrown some distance by the explosion, but due to the protection offered by his rucksack and body-armour, suffered only a nose-bleed,

perforated ear drums and some disorientation. The pack was ripped from his back by the explosion, and his body armour and helmet were pitted by grenade fragments. Of the other three members of his patrol, the rear man managed to take cover by retreating round the corner of a building; the patrol commander threw himself to ground, and received a superficial face wound from a grenade fragment; and the final team member did not have time to react, and remained on his feet, and would have been within the lethal range of the grenade but for Croucher's action. The explosion breached a large lithium battery which was in Croucher's pack to power the patrol's electronic countermeasures equipment, causing it to burst into flames. A medic recommended that he be evacuated, but he insisted on continuing as the members of the patrol realised that Taliban fighters would probably come to investigate the explosion, and this would give the marines the opportunity to ambush them. Lance Corporal Croucher engages in many charitable events including being the patron of the Royal Star & Garter Home here in Birmingham

Marine Jonathan David Thomas Crookes was born in Birmingham and lived with his mother and fiancée, Danielle Birmingham. Jon was 26 years old.

He joined the Royal Marines Reserve, Birmingham Detachment, in September 2005 passing for duty as a Royal Marines Commando in November 2006. He was awarded the Commando Dagger for the best all-round recruit in training. Outside of the Royal Marines he was studying for a degree in international relations and worked as a tree surgeon and labourer.

Volunteering for an operational tour to Afghanistan, he was drafted to 40 Commando Royal Marines in May 2007. Shortly after, he deployed to Sangin, Afghanistan, on Op HERRICK 7. In September 2009 he was once again mobilised to join 40 Commando Royal Marines for deployment to Afghanistan.

Joining Charlie Company, he immediately conducted Mission Specific Training (MST) for Op HERRICK 12. In April 2010 he deployed to Afghanistan and was based at Forward Operating Base Sabit Qadam.

During the early evening of Friday 16 July 2010, Charlie Company was conducting a local reassurance patrol. At 1839hrs local time an explosion occurred. Tragically Marine Crookes was killed in action as a result of the blast.

Local community engagement, charity work and youth activity

The Birmingham Detachment also involves itself in numerous charitable events within Birmingham and the surrounding area ranging from abseiling down the Hyatt Hotel to raise the profile of the Royal British Legion and launch the Poppy Appeal, conducting a 'death slide' from the roof of Baskerville house in Centenary Square also in support of the poppy appeal to

the performance at numerous Help for Hero's, Troop Aid and other events within the City. The most recent notable charity event celebrating the Royal Marines 350th anniversary last year saw the Birmingham detachment run from the National Arboretum in Staffordshire to the Birmingham Council House with around 30 personal, Royal Marine Association members, cadets and local partners culminating in being met by the then Lord Mayor and an evening celebration.

The detachments participate in the City's Service of remembrance each year providing a marching contingent along with displays at the City's Armed Forces day celebrations, The Lord Mayors Show and celebrating Sport in Birmingham.

Birmingham Detachment is also heavily associated and involved with Birmingham Cadets thus providing an outlet and a role modelling for young children and people within the City.

Birmingham detachment also reached out to other vulnerable members of the community and is currently engaged in ethnic minority and female domestic violence groups from a support and engagement perspective.

Appendices

<http://www.wmrfca.org/reserve-forces/news/283-rmr-welcome-employer-to-their-showcase-event.html>

<http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news-and-latest-activity/news/2014/july/03/160704-1664-baton>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/2445513/Royal-Marine-who-jumped-on-grenade-awarded-George-Cross.html>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/fatalities/marine-jonathan-david-thomas-crookes-killed-in-afghanistan>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_Augustus_Finch

MOBILISATION: Birmingham Detachment Only

2003 TELIC	Cpl Burnham Cpl Price Cpl Hulbert Mne Harness
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2004 TELIC	C/Sgt Bishop
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2005 TELIC	Capt Burnham Sgt Price L/Cpl Harness L/Cpl Sanderson L/Cpl Smith G Mne Oakley Mne Deacon Mne Moffatt Mne Smith C
2006 TELIC	C/Sgt Bishop
2007 HERRICK	Cpl Harness Cpl Sanderson L/Cpl Croucher Mne Crookes Mne Anderson Mne Wood
2008 HERRICK 9	C/Sgt Bishop L/Cpl Deacon Mne Lynskey Mne Whitehouse Mne Oakley Mne Mika
2009/10 HERRICK 12	WO2 Shackell Mne Crookes – KIA July 2010 Mne Allen Mne Jones Mne Anderson Mne Frearson LCpl Mattock
2010/11 HERRICK	Mne Roberts Cpl Mika
2012 HERRICK 17	Mne Powell
2012 Op OLYMPIC	Cpl Sanderson Cpl Harness Mne Roberts Mne Pearson Mne Anderson Mne Partridge Mne Pannu Mne Dunscombe
2014 Op COMET	Mne Pearson Mne Partridge Mne Anderson Cpl Allen Cpl Deacon
2015 – 16 UK Border Force Protection	Cpl Mattock Cpl Deacon