

## Information sheet no 025

# Royal Naval Division

The Royal Naval Division was formed in August 1914 from naval reserve forces when warships of the fleet were fully crewed. The tradition of naval personnel serving on land had been long established with naval brigades and a shortfall in infantry divisions in the Army led to the formation of the RND to supplement the land forces. The RND remained under Admiralty control even though they were fighting on land alongside the Army. Reserve personnel from the Royal Naval Reserve, Royal Fleet Reserve and the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve with a brigade of Marines were assembled at Crystal Palace to form the RND. The battalions were named after famous naval people and were:

1st Brigade: Collingwood, Hawke, Benbow, Drake

2nd Brigade: Howe, Hood, Anson, Nelson

3rd Brigade (RM): Portsmouth, Plymouth, Chatham, Deal

When the RND had transferred to France in May 1916, they were re-designated the 63rd (RN) Division and were supplemented by additional army battalions.

188th Brigade: Anson, Howe, 1st and 2nd RM battalions

189th Brigade: Drake, Hood, Nelson, Hawke

190th Brigade: Hon Artillery Co., 7th Batt. Royal Fusiliers, 4th Batt. Bedfordshire Regt, 10th Batt. Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

The RND were sent into many theatres of war and battles including:

Antwerp (1914), Gallipoli (1915), Ancre Valley and Salonika (1916), Passchendaele, Gavrelle, Welsh Ridge (1917)

They were also active at the Hindenberg Line to stem the German offensive in 1918 and continued up until the end of the war at Cambrai, Canal du Nord, St Quentin Canal and Mons. The RND sustained great losses - probably three times the original number of men recruited.

The RND retained the great naval traditions, even while on land. They flew the White Ensign, used bells to signal time, used naval language (including "going ashore" and "coming on board"), continued to use naval ranks rather than army equivalents and sat during the toast for the King's health. Attempts to convert the RND to conform to Army practices were tried but were generally unsuccessful, especially an attempt to disband the RND in 1917 which was thwarted by the influence of the First Lord of Admiralty, Sir Edward Carson. The RND was disbanded in 1919 after an inspection and address by the Prince of Wales.

A memorial to the 45,000 RND men who gave their lives during the war was commissioned by surviving members of the RND. The memorial was designed by Edward Lutyens and placed in the NW corner of Horse Guards Parade

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outside the balustrade of the Old Admiralty Building. In 1939 it was dismantled in order to construct the Admiralty Citadel and put into storage. In 1951 it was re-erected at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich. On the closure of the college, it was relocated back to Horse Guards Parade and rededicated on 13 November 2003 by HRH the Prince of Wales. It is now a Grade II listed structure.