

ELEVEN EMPTY SPACES

PART OF AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT RECORDING AND REMEMBERING THE EVENTS OF THE IRA ATTACK ON THE ROYAL MARINES SCHOOL OF MUSIC, DEAL ON 22 SEPTEMBER 1989

At 8.22 a.m. on Friday 22nd September 1989 a massive blast destroyed all three floors of the recreation centre at the Royal Marine School of Music, Deal, killing 10 bandsmen and injuring 22, one of whom died a month later.



Nearby residents, local emergency services and other marines frantically cleared away the rubble by hand until heavy lifting equipment arrived. Striking Kent ambulance workers abandoned their industrial action to ferry the casualties to hospital. Picture courtesy of the Dover Museum.



The Royal Marines Band marches through Deal 1989
Just seven days after the bomb the defiant band marched through huge crowds in the streets of Deal and Walmer. Spaces were left in the ranks where the eleven dead would have marched.
Picture courtesy of the Dover Museum.



The Royal Marines Band at Deal Barracks circa 1910.
Picture courtesy of the Dover Museum.



Church Parade of the Royal Marines, Deal circa 1910.
Picture courtesy of the Dover Museum.

The Deal Barracks bombing was part of a concerted campaign by the IRA against the deployment of the British Army in Northern Ireland since 1969. The bomb had been planted by an IRA cell the night before and contained 15lb (7Kg) of explosive

The Royal Marines School of Music had been based in Walmer since 1950, merging with the Royal Naval School of Music which had been at the barracks since 1930. It was a professional training centre for students aged 16 and over, providing 32 months training as musicians and battlefield medics

The Deal Memorial Bandstand on Walmer Green was opened in 1993 and has the names of the eleven dead inscribed on plaques. It was paid for, and is maintained by, the local community and businesses via donations.

The School of Music relocated to Portsmouth in 1996 and the barracks were closed and converted to residential and commercial use. The Royal Marines band still maintains a close link with Deal and Walmer and play at the bandstand every year in memory of their colleagues.

Dover Museum has launched an oral history project to mark the 20th anniversary of the bombing of the Royal Marine School of Music at Deal, with funding from the 'Their Past Your Future' project on 20th Century conflict, Deal Town Council and Walmer Parish Council.

As well as recording the experiences of those who were serving at the Walmer Barracks, the project includes the recollections of members of the local community and emergency services during the time of the bombing.



The converted School of Music buildings
Picture courtesy of the Dover Museum.



The annual performance by the Royal Marines Band at the Deal Memorial Bandstand on Walmer Green
Picture courtesy of the Dover Museum.

