



**Earle Ryan RM133496 931 Squad 1958 – 1960.**  
**Pictured above in 2015 Captaining the Royal Marines Globes team.**  
 By RMFA Historian Shaun Foster

Earle Ryan was born in Shepton Mallet Somerset on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1937 & during the war years he lived with his Mother and Gran in Bangor North Wales which was his mother's home city. His Father, a Sergeant in the Green Howards was abroad fighting the Germans, he fought in El Alamein and was extremely lucky to survive the war.



**1949 Wharton C of E School Winsford under 14s**  
**Winners of the Winsford Schools Shield**

**Back row L to R** Arnold Sutton, Alan Preston, Donald Woodward, Frank Lever, Ian Hooks.  
**Front row L to R** Alan Dudley, Ian Blackburn, Terry Curzon, Earle Ryan (aged 12), George Dalton, Alan Hulse

As a family they returned to Winsford Cheshire where Earle aged 10 started playing football. He was a left half back in those days & at the age of 14 he was selected for the towns team of Winsford & Middlewich schoolboys' team. They had quite a good side getting into the quarter final of the English schoolboy's trophy. Earle remembers playing against Stoke school boys away at Stoke City's Victoria Park the home ground of the famous Sir Stanley Matthew's. Winsford and Middlewich schoolboys had five schools to choose from whereas Stoke had five different towns to select from. Not deterred by the mammoth task ahead they beat Stoke school boy's 2-1 with Earle being named man of the match by the local press who described him as the stalwart of the defence.



**1951-52 Winsford and Middlewich schools' team**

**Back row L to R** George Maddock, Ron Clarke, Ray Atherton, Ron Fletcher, Michael Isherwood, Alan Hulse  
**Front row L to R** Peter Corr, Norman Jones, Michael Jones (Capt), Earle Ryan, Ron Bailly

Leaving school in 1952 aged 15 he played for Middlewich Athletic Rangers who Earle recalls had a great unbeatable team winning everything by large scores. After 12 months working in a local butcher's shop, he started an apprenticeship as a carpenter/joiner aged 16. These were the days of National Service where the National Service act 1948 required that from 1st January 1949, healthy males 17 to 21 years old were required to serve in the armed forces for 18 months, and remain on the reserve list for four years.

Anyone attending an apprenticeship were allowed to until the age of 21 providing you attended night school for two hours twice a week and then it would be deferred every 12 months. At the age of 18 you were required to register for National Service. Earle remembers well prior to attending the recruitment centre at Liverpool having a conversation with his father, a World War 2 veteran. His words were " Son when you register at Liverpool put down the Royal Marines, they are the best" what wise words. At Liverpool he did what his father had said when asked for a choice, "Royal Marines" please. In those days what you asked for and what you got were totally different.

Anyway, he had 3 years to wait until he would eventually join up. In the meantime, he started playing full back for Winsford United as the only amateur in the side of part time professionals. In those days he would play in front of crowds of about five or six thousand especially local derby games. When the team played away from home on Saturday Winsford was empty. During his time at Winsford United he played in the same team as Billy Foulkes who also played for Newcastle United, Southampton, Chester and Wales to name just a few. He also



played alongside Neil Franklin the former Stoke, Hull City & England centre half when he played for Crewe, what a player he was, his passes were inch perfect shear class.

At Winsford United he played in the Cheshire league which was a higher league than the league that teams such as Wigan and Wimbledon played in those days. Earle recalls playing at first for Winsford United reserve team & well remembers marking a high scoring inside right who played for Stockton Heath team called Roger Hunt, yes thee Roger Hunt of Liverpool & England fame who won the world cup in 1966. Earle has met Roger several times over the years and has great pride in remined Roger that he didn't score against him that day. Another well-known footballer named Alan Oakes is a townie friend of his who as a lad would watch Earle playing for Winsford United. Alan holds the record number of appearances for Manchester City (564). After he retired, he would play Golf with him and his cousin Glyn Pardoe also former Man City player. Earle remembers well Alan telling him " Earle you were a far better player than I was if only you'd had full time training like me" what kind words.



**1955-56 Winsford United FC with Cheshire League challenge Cup**

**Back row L to R** Mr F Poole, T Noden, H Kettle, T W Ashbury, J Skellon, NF Weedall S Berry, G Wilkinson.

**Middle row L to R** Bill Burrows (as Trainer) Cliff Noden, K Hughes G Coffin, Eric Goulding, D Bould Harry Wragg, Bill Johnson, Earle Ryan, Frank Sutcliffe, Jim Egerton (trainer), Alf Ravenscroft, E Kay, Bill Foukes.

**Front row L to R** Ron Bailey. Pat Wildigg, Billy Russell, George Kirby, Arthur Woodall, Tommy Price (kneeling)

There were, according to the Manchester papers scouts from Arsenal, Bury & Wolves watching him. Much against his father's wishes he signed professionally for Winsford United in 1955 for £5 a week with £1.50 for a win & £5 for in win in the FA cup & £1 for a draw. Earle says it was reputed that Bobby Charlton and Nobby Stiles who were the same age as it and playing for Man United were getting less than £5 a week.

In 1958 aged 21 having completed his apprenticeship he returned to the recruitment office in Liverpool. There were about 50 or 60 lads who had put down for the Royal Marines and out of all these only two of them were chosen after a written test, Earle and a scouse lad named Owen. He remembers well a tall immaculate Royal Marine Sergeant saying to him "well done son you'll soon be wearing this green beret" Didn't know what he was meaning at the time. Earle came home to the delight of his father who said, "I told you that you would get in the Royal Marines now don't let me down". Over years he often wondered how he was selected for the Corps. It has been suggested that as a fit pro footballer he had a certain degree of fitness that could be enhanced.

Aged 21 he left home and his parents for the first time as he departed Winsford and headed for Crewe train station for the journey south to a small station in Devon named Exton just down the hill from the Infantry Training Centre Royal Marines (ITCRM). It was a Monday in August 1958, the start of the football season, but for Earle Ryan it was day one of a new chapter in his life as he was one of a few lads that got off the train and was greeted by a Royal Marine NCO & piled straight into the back of a canvas covered lorry and driven up the hill

into the camp where they would not be allowed back out through the gates for the first 7 weeks. Housed in Nissan type huts at Lymptone with approximately 12 people per hut they were up before 0600hrs & lights out was 2200hrs.

On the first Wednesday after noticing on his record that he was a pro footballer he was excused duties to play on the top field for Lymptone reserves. He scored 4 goals in that match and the following Wednesday he was selected for the first eleven who consisted of Royal Marines of various ranks. These games got him through the gates once a week on a Wednesday, a privilege not bestowed to any of his 931 Squad buddies.

There was however a big disadvantage of playing away matches in the Devon league as his regular teammates would stop at a pub drinking scrumpy, and even though Earle didn't drink it still resulting in him getting back to camp mid evening. This meant him bulling his boots late into the night after lights out and also having missed important weapon drill that afternoon. He remembers writing home telling his parents about it only for his father, a World War 2 veteran to write back telling him in no uncertain terms what he should do and that he should write more cheerful letters to Mum or don't write at all, He told him he wasn't the only lad doing National Service and to get on with it. So here he was playing football for Lymptone not in defence but as inside right and getting one or two goals.

The next thing of note Earle recalls was on the 12th of November 1958 where he believes at Chatham, he broke his collarbone playing for ITCRM in the semi-final of the Tunney Cup, it was witnessed by two of his teammates, right back DC May RM8084 and Cpl VC Davies who was a right winger and team Captain. He had fully recovered from his injury in time to play the Tunney Cup final which they won 2-0 against Depot RM, we hope one day that 1958 Winners photograph will surface from someone.

At this time, November 1958 he had finished his initial training and was the only one out of his squad to have been posted to Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean where a small detachment of Royal Marines was helping with testing the Atomic bomb. He had been issued and fitted out with his tropical uniform prior to the match and all his squad mates were jealous of him travelling via Honolulu to Christmas Island. His father was less pleased and didn't want him to serve where they were testing atom bomb.

However, due to the injury his posting was cancelled, and a Squaddie mate of his Scouse Robert's took his place. Years afterwards it emerged that many of our military posted to Christmas Island sadly died early in life most likely due to being posted there during the emission of radiation. Earle now looks back on his injury as a welcome blessing in disguise. After recovering from his injury, he joined 932 Squad where he completed his Commando course, and he remembers one of his instructors was a National Service officer named Richard Sharp, a famous Rugby Union player for England.

<b>1958 Navy Cup Plymouth Command Area Final Royal Marines Barracks Plymouth v Infantry Training Centre Royal Marines (ITCRM)</b>	
<b>RM barracks Plymouth Team</b>	<b>ITCRM Team</b>
1. Mne Kennelly	1. Mne Goodison
2. Sgt Brooks	2. Mne May
3. Mne Crozier	3. Mne Hughes
4. Mne Severn	4. Mne Cowling
5. Sgt Purcell	5. Mne Barrett
6. Cpl Bickford (Capt)	6. Sgt Page
7. Mne Rook	7. Cpl Davies (Capt)
8. Cpl Stokes	8. Mne Ryan
9. Cpl Coates	9. Mne Shaw
10. Mne Riseborough	10. Mne LeFrost
11. Mne Davies	11. Mne Wingfield
Referee CPO Wtr Finch (RNB), Linesman L/S Moore (Defiance), C/Mech Turbey (HMS Urchin)	

\* The 1958 ITCRM Tunney Cup winning team was the same line up as above. ITCRM beat Depot RM 2-0 thanks to goals from Mne Shaw & Mne Earle Ryan.





**Earle Ryan's 1958 Royal Marines Challenge Trophy "The Tunney Cup" Winners Medal.**

On 17th March 1959 he was posted to Malta with 45 Commando where he soon started playing for the football team. One of the games he played was whilst on exercise in North Africa which happened to be in the same area's his father had fought in WW2, it was against a Libyan side in Benghazi, and he remembers well travelling through Benghazi to the ground in the back of a lorry and the road either side was crowded with school children all shouting probably the only English they knew "King Farouk fuck Queen Lizzie" he just couldn't believe what he was hearing. They drew 1-1 with their team playing bare footed on a hard surface.



**1959 45 Commando RM Malta**

**Back row L to R** Earle Ryan, Jock Parkes, TBC3, TBC4, TBC5, TBC6  
**Front row L to R** TBC7, Kevin Wood, TBC9, TBC10, TBC11

Earle cheekily hates to admit but whilst playing against a Maltese team at Sliema stadium he was sent off for punching and dropping an opponent who called him an English b\*\*\*\*d, He did not appear before the Maltese FA in person, but they banned him and the offending opponent for 2 matches each, however, it was not over for

Earle who had to appear before the Commanding Officer who told him that he expects National Servicemen to be able to look after themselves as we are ambassadors of the British Government and he had let the Government down and his punishment was that he was forbidden to play RM football on the island of Malta again.



**6<sup>th</sup> May 1960 Earle Ryan performing ceremonial duties Princess Margret's wedding.**

With only a few months left of his National Service he left his 45 Commando mates who were the first to go to Aden and was shipped home to Eastney Barracks where he attended duties at Princess Margaret wedding ceremony on 6th May 1960 in London.

Then shortly after the wedding he was demobbed joining the Cheshire Constabulary on 11th July 1960. The fact that he had previously signed professional forms for Winsford United meant he was not allowed to play for the Police amateur football team until he received clearance from the Chairman of the English FA Sir Stanley Rous.

His Constabulary football setup was split into about 7 Divisions and he started playing for Runcorn Division. The team winning everything back then was the North East Cheshire Division who were unbeaten for years and it just so happened that Earle's first game was against them, Runcorn Division won, and Earle scored a brace. It would appear the senior Police Officer for North East would get good footballers transferred to his Division. A couple of North East players came to Runcorn on promotion and strengthened the team and they went on to win many league titles and cups. With his division being so close to Liverpool they played in the Merseyside Police league and once a year they picked a team to represent that league against the North Wales police team and Earle was the only Cheshire Police officer to have been selected to play for them. One of the players in that team was a young left winger cadet named Neil Ablett who would later father a son, Gareth "Gary" Ablett who went on to play Liverpool.

Not only a divisional player Earle was also a regular in the County team playing against other Police Forces until September 1964 when playing a county trial match, he broke his tibia & fibula in his right leg by his divisional teammate Arthur Simpkins. During his 30 years' service mainly in CID he represented Cheshire at football, Golf (9 handicap aged 64) and crown green bowling. After the broken leg he played little football thereafter other than 7 a side. He also tried his hand at management and led Runcorn Police to six league titles on the trot and five cup successes.

Earle retired from the Police force in 1990 after 30 years' and in June 1991 he started working for Littlewoods pools as a claim's investigator until 1998. His job was to investigate and pay out big pool's winners, the biggest cheque he ever paid out was for 2 million 293 thousand pounds. In his job he would meet all type of celebrities who on the Wednesday would make mock cheque presentations to the winners whereas he presented the real cheque on the Friday after 12 noon.



During his time at Littlewoods, they sponsored the Football Association Cup for 4 years and consequently he would attend the semi-finals and the final at Wembley. During the final he would look after Littlewoods guests such as Richard Branson, Nick Faldo etc. They would be wined, dined and entertained all at Littlewoods expense.



**Earle with 1966 England World Cup Winner Gordon Banks**

In 2015 Earle reached out to the Royal Marines Football Association to let them know he won the USMC Challenge Trophy 'The Tunney' in 1958 for ITCRM and not 1959 as stated on the RMFA website at the time. After establishing communications Earle was invited down to the 2015 Tunney Cup tournament that is now played over one week and to pull on a strip for the Globes against the Laurels in the RM Football reunion match. Not only did he Captain the team, but he also became the oldest player to represent the team at 77 years 11 months old.



**2015 Globes v Laurels Royal Marines reunion football match. The Globes team**

**Back row L to R** Paul Barrett, Stevie Marr, Jase Kilner, Davie Carns, Dutch Holland, Steve Waller, Nick Taylor, George Bolton, Shaun Foster (Manager)

**Front row L to R** John Byrne, Steve Stacey, Jim Daly, Earle Ryan (Capt), Scotty Nicholson, Ian Pomeroy, Tommy McPhee



**2018 Top Field Commando Training Centre Royal Marines Lympstone Devon. Earle pictured touching the Tunney Cup that he won 60 years earlier in 1958**

Sticking with the football theme Earle is very proud of his son Michael who made match day football pennants for Manchester United and also made football flags that he sold outside Old Trafford once owning up to 10 stalls, his Runcorn company Robert Grieg was formed in 1923 by his Grandad. Earle showed me a newspaper cutting of his son getting a contract in 1999 to supply Everton with flags with an initial order of 2000 boxing day flags to turn around in just 4 days.



**Earle's son Michael with numerous stalls outside Old Trafford.**

Once a Royal Always a Royal Marine  
Per Mare Per Terram