



THE ROYAL VISIT TO THE HOME FLEET

The aims stated in the Orders were to give pleasure to Her Majesty, to demonstrate the traditional loyalty of the Fleet and to give the Queen and her sailors the chance to see each other. Not a tall order perhaps, but an immense amount of organisation went into achieving the aims, and they were more than achieved, for it is fair to say that the Royal Visit gave pleasure to everyone.

The visit began appropriately with a meeting at sea.

The Home Fleet, in two columns, approached *Britannia* and her escorts *Duchess*, *Diamond* and *Corunna* at 21 knots, on a reciprocal course until about two miles distant, when columns wheeled simultaneously outwards to allow the Royal Yacht to pass between them. At the same time saluting ships fired a co-ordinated Royal Salute. Columns were then led round in succession to steam past the *Britannia* in single line ahead, on a parallel course and half a cable clear. Ships were manned and three cheers given for Her Majesty as they passed.

When *Apollo*, wearing the flag of the Commander-in-Chief, the last ship in the line, was past, a signal was executed detaching the Carrier Squadron, *Ark Royal* and *Albion*, for the fly past. The remaining ships were then reformed into two columns to act as Royal Escort for the entry into harbour.

An hour later four submarines, *Artful*, *Trump*, *Subtle* and *Springer* steamed past in column on a reciprocal course with casings manned, wheeling to follow in the wake of the Royal Yacht. Then from astern the squadrons from *Ark Royal* and *Albion* swept overhead led by 27 Seahawks and Wyverns in "E II R" formation.

The formation of the Fleet was again altered for *Britannia* to precede ships into Cromarty Firth where the Queen was cheered by the tug *Reward*, the flag-waving inhabitants of Cromarty, and

Maidstone, which had remained all day securely at a buoy, being unable through want of speed to take part in the meeting at sea.

Then the harbour programme began. That evening Her Majesty dined with two hundred of her officers in *Ocean's* hangar and the following morning visited *Superb*, *Albion*, *Duchess* and *Maidstone* to witness a march past of their companies and those of smaller ships transferred for the occasion. The morning ended with an informal visit to the wardroom in *Maidstone* and lunch with the Commander-in-Chief onboard. In the afternoon Her Majesty visited *Agincourt* and *Ocean* before returning to *Britannia*. Later on Tuesday evening a reception was held by command of Her Majesty on board the Royal Yacht after which The Queen entertained her Flag Officers to dinner and later attended the Fleet concert held in *Albion's* hangar, with an audience of over a thousand ratings.

On the morning of 29th May, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh left the *Britannia* and passed down the lines of the anchored Fleet in the Royal Barge. Ships massed and cheered as Her Majesty went by. The Queen embarked in *Ark Royal*, watched the ship's company march past and then *Ark Royal* weighed and proceeded to sea, wearing the Royal Standard while the Fleet fired a Royal Salute in farewell. The Queen spent the forenoon onboard watching flying operations, transferring eventually to *Britannia* and later disembarking at Lossiemouth.

Thus ended the Home Fleet's Royal Occasion. It had meant a great deal of planning and preparation but it was well worth the pleasure which it undoubtedly gave, and the memory will long remain with us all, especially the hundreds to whom the Queen must have spoken.