

# ROYAL YACHTS of & ENGLAND

*By Frank Driscoll*

QUEEN ELIZABETH and Prince Philip have a new royal yacht, *Britannia*. It is a fine sea-going vessel, 413 feet long, and with a speed of 21 knots. Three hundred and fifty years ago, in 1604, the first English royal yacht, given by James I to his son Henry, Prince of Wales, sailed on the Thames at Whitehall. This first royal yacht was the *Disdain*, a sailing cutter, 28 feet long, and intended to give the young prince "instruction in the business of shipping and sailing, for which he showed a strong inclination."

Between these two vessels, so unlike, came a long line of royal yachts, each with its own merits. After the little *Disdain* came what is probably the most famous of royal yachts, the *Mary*, given to Charles II in 1660 by a group of Dutch businessmen, and today renowned as the pioneer of yacht racing. Charles was delighted with his new acquisition. The *Mary* was cutter-rigged, 52 feet long, ornate in design, and

with much gilded carving, particularly around the stern cabin, which had a high coach-roof and side windows. For answering royal salutes, she carried eight little guns which could be fired through carved and gilded ports cut in the side of the vessel. On her stern, under three elaborate lanterns, was the royal arms of England, and her figure-head was a unicorn.

The *Mary* was the outcome of Charles' exile in Holland, where he spent much of his time sailing on the inland waterways. Charles became so engrossed in the new sport of yachting that within a few years the royal household boasted of no fewer than 14 sailing pleasure craft. Members of the Court quickly followed his new taste, and in 1661 the first yacht race was held between Charles and his brother, the Duke of York, for a £100 wager, from

Greenwich to Gravesend and back. As recorded at the time, "The King lost it going, the wind being contrary, but saved stakes in returning. There were divers noble persons and lords on board, His Majesty sometimes steering himself. His barge and kitchen boat attended."

Even afloat, Charles forgot nothing!

The original *Mary* was lost off Holyhead in 1675 and replaced two years later by another vessel also named *Mary*. This second *Mary* acted as yacht to the royal household until she was broken up in 1816 — after 139 years of royal service.

James II had no time to build yachts in his short reign, but William and Mary made great use of the craft left by Charles, and built at least one big vessel of their own — the *William and Mary*, which replaced the second *Mary* as chief royal yacht.

Queen Anne was no yachtswoman, but did add to the line of royal yachts by building the *Charlot* of 155 tons.

BY THE middle of the 18th century royal yachts had changed from cutter to ship-rig; that is, they had three masts instead of one, and carried square sails on each mast. They were used solely for pleasure purposes, semi-State occasions, such as visiting the fleet and dockyards, and also for bringing foreign royalty to and from London.

For instance, when the young King George III decided to make Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz his bride, he sent his yacht the *Royal Charlotte* (72 feet long) to Germany to bring the Princess to London. Thackeray tells us of the embarkation: "So the Princess jumped with joy, went upstairs and packed all her trunks, and set off straightway for her new kingdom in a beautiful yacht with a harpsichord on board for her to play upon, and around her a beautiful fleet, all covered with flags and streamers."

In 1803, George III built himself a much larger yacht, named the *Royal Sovereign*, and described as "far exceeding any others of her kind." A bust of the Queen was the figurehead, supported by figures of Peace and Plenty, and her stern was decorated with similar carvings of Prudence, Temperance, Wisdom, and Justice, "equally grand." The three royal apartments were inlaid with damask panels ornamented with gold borders.

Life aboard the royal yachts during the early part of the 19th century must have been strikingly different to that experienced by officers and men serving on other vessels of His Majesty's fleet. A young officer, detailed to join the *Royal Sovereign*, was summoned to the Admiralty and confidentially informed of their lordships' concern over the mess bills aboard the yacht. And quite rightly too, for they amounted to £1000 in six weeks — a formidable

figure even today. The young officer was to see that the officers' mess was conducted on a less lavish scale. Their lordships advocated the following rule-of-thumb method of catering for officers:

"Keep a gentlemanly table. Fish, soup, joint, and occasional game, and for wine, port and sherry; and if you have a friend to table, a little champagne and claret will do no harm." They omitted to stipulate, however, what constituted "a little!"

DURING the long reign of Queen Victoria many changes took place in Britain, and not least important among these was the use of steam instead of sail. Victoria took a live interest in yachting, and, as she did with so many other things, expressed herself unequivocally on what she considered a royal yacht should be. At the age of 23, when she had been on the throne for five years, she made a cruise to Leith in Scotland in the *Royal George*, then 25 years old and relying solely on sail — but she came back to London in a paddle-steamer specially chartered in Scotland.

What Victoria thought of sticks and string for her royal yacht can be judged by the fact that six weeks later, after some very pointed and rapid correspondence between her ministers and the Admiralty, the keel of the first steam royal yacht was laid at Pembroke. It was to be the first *Victoria and Albert*, 200 feet long, paddle-driven, and with

a speed of 11.5 knots. On the run to Leith, the *Royal George* at best achieved six knots.

In 1855, a new *Victoria and Albert* was built for the Queen, again paddle-driven, but being 2342 tons to her predecessor's 1034, and 300 feet long. This new vessel, with a clipper bow, two funnels, and a speed of 14.75 knots, proved to be a fine sea-boat.

Apparently, Victoria's conception of a royal yacht was fully realized in this second *Victoria and Albert*, for she kept the vessel as her chief royal yacht for the next fifty years. But in addition she had numerous other smaller yachts built. When Victoria died at Osborne in 1901, it was the little *Alberta*, one of her personal yachts, that carried her to the mainland.

*Victoria and Albert III*, although launched during Queen Victoria's reign, was never used by her. She refused to sail in the new vessel after an accident had occurred shortly after the launching. The vessel listed violently and had to undergo major repairs. However, Victoria's son, Edward VII, had more faith in his engineers and naval architects, and on coming to the throne used the *Victoria and Albert III* extensively as his principal royal yacht.

To Edward VII also goes the credit of bringing sail back to royal yachts. This was with the famous *Britannia*, a fast-racing cutter built in 1893, when Edward was Prince of Wales. During her 43 years of

royal service, *Britannia* proved to be something no other royal yacht had been before. She was the star of the big class racing cutters, raced regularly at all regattas, and what is more, usually led the fleet home.

Coming to the throne in 1901, Edward VII found less and less time for his beloved sport of yacht racing, and it was not long before *Britannia* appeared with a reduced sail plan, and the king contented himself with short, more leisurely cruises. But his son, Prince George, Duke of York, later King George V, and then a young naval officer, took to the sport of yacht racing in a small class boat — a “One Rater.”

Prince George went to a yacht builders at Cowes and ordered a boat of this class — on one condition: that she was to be ready to sail before the end of his leave. Apparently, even a king’s son could not overstay his leave!

This small craft gave Prince George the taste for salt-water racing, and in 1913, when he was King George V, he brought *Britannia* back into class racing. After a fine season at Cowes and the South Coast regattas, World War I put a stop to yacht racing, and it was not until 1920 that *Britannia* was out racing again.

She was then 27 years old, and although competing with much more modern yachts, she acquitted herself extremely well in the big handicap class. But the revolutionary changes taking place in racing yachts at the time gave little hope for the

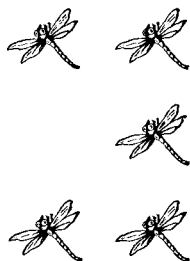
continued success of *Britannia*. The question was whether the King should build a new yacht or have his beloved *Britannia* modernized. His faith lay in *Britannia*, and the following year she appeared in a new rig.

With the death of King George V in 1936, *Britannia* was to race no more. The king had not forgotten her, even at the end. By his wish she was to be given a sea burial. Midnight, July 9th, they came for her — two destroyers from Portsmouth. They took her out around St. Catherine’s Point, where the King had said she was to rest. They put explosives deep in her hull.

QUEEN ELIZABETH and Prince Philip already have two small sailing yachts: *Bluebottle*, a 29-foot Dragon class racing yacht, given to them as a wedding gift by the Island Sailing Club of Cowes; and *Coweslip*, a 20-foot fast open portable racing craft given to the prince by the village of Cowes.

And now comes the glory of all British royal yachts, the new *Britannia*, named after King George V’s racing cutter. The new royal yacht can be converted into a hospital ship with a minimum of structural alterations. Her lavish State apartments can become hospital wards, while the after-end of the shelter deck, normally the Queen and the Prince’s “private” deck, can be utilized for landing helicopter ambulances.

# That Shimonoseki Jeal



===== By Harry T. Brundidge

WE WERE sitting in the San-yo restaurant in Shimonoseki, a lovely old historic city on the southwestern tip of Honshu (Main Island) of Japan. Across the straits, less than a mile and a half away, we could see the twinkling lights of Moji. Moji and Shimonoseki hold the key to the western gateway of Seto-Naikai, or as we foreigners call it, the beautiful "Inland Sea." For the narrow straits between them is a bottle-neck to the Sea of Japan, and to Korea, Manchuria, and the ports of China. Pusan, the port which became famous during the Korean war, is only 150 miles away.

We had finished our smoked eels and raw blow-fish when my host, Hirom Yagi, poured the last of the hot *sake* into the tiny cups, lighted a cigarette and asked:

"Harry-san, when did the Allied forces first land in Japan?"

"Nineteen forty-five, of course," the writer answered.

"Wrong."

"Are you referring to Commodore Perry?"

"I said Allied forces, didn't I?"

"Let me think that one over."

Yagi-san grinned.

"Bet you a jar of *sake* you couldn't guess between now and train time — but you are sitting within a few miles of the spot where the Allied Forces *first* invaded Japan."

"You win, Yagi-san."

"I'll give the date of the first invasion and then tell you the story," he smiled. "The date was September 5-8, 1864, and the place was Dannoura, the beach at the eastern end of Shimonoseki. It seems to have been a lost chapter in American history, because it happened during your Civil War. Anyway, I've never found reference to it in any work on American history — and I've read most of them. During many visits to the United States I never encountered one person who ever even heard of this invasion. But here is the story: