



## Information sheet no 062

# Royal reviews of the Fleet

The first Royal review of the fleet has been recorded as being held in 1415 when Henry V reviewed his ships prior to sailing to France which ended in the victory of Agincourt. Since then, 46 Royal naval reviews have taken place. Reasons for holding a review vary. Originally they were held when a mobilisation for war was carried out and secondly, to demonstrate the strength of the fleet to potential enemies. Examples of the first reason can be seen in 1415, 1853 (imminent war with Russia) and 1914, while examples for the second, came in 1700 when Peter the Great visited Britain, the visit of the Russian Tsar and Kings of France and Prussia in 1844 and lastly the visit of Kaiser Wilhelm II and Admiral von Tirpitz in 1889. From the early part of the twentieth century, it became customary to hold a review to mark the Coronation and Royal Jubilees of the reigning monarch. This custom ended in 2002 when it was decided not to hold one to mark Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee in that year due to cost. Therefore, the last commemorative review was held in 1977 to mark the Silver Jubilee of Elizabeth II. However, in 2005, a special international naval review by the Queen, to include foreign navies, tall ships etc., was held to commemorate the bicentenary of the battle of Trafalgar.

There have also been other types of royal review. One of these has been to mark the presentation of Colours to the Royal Navy by the reigning monarch. There have been three such reviews in 1924, 1969 and 2003. Additionally, there have been reviews to celebrate victories (such as the one in 1919 after World War 1) and general Allied co-operation (such as the NATO review in 1969)

Most of the commemorative reviews have been held at Spithead, the anchorage outside of Portsmouth Harbour in the channel known as the Solent. However, reviews can take place elsewhere. The review in July 1919 was held at Southend to mark the naval victories of the Great War and in 1965, a review of part of the fleet was held in the Clyde. Two of the Colour Presentation reviews have also been held elsewhere – Torbay in 1969 and Plymouth in 2003.

The largest review held was never advertised for it was a review of the D-Day invasion fleet in May 1944; 800 vessels were present ranging from capital vessels to small minesweeper and landing craft.

The reign of Queen Victoria saw 17 Royal reviews of the fleet - the first being 1842 and the last in 1899. Her Diamond Jubilee review in 1897 and the review of 1899 were presided over by the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) as the Queen was too frail to attend in person.

The Royal reviews of the last century are outlined below:

1909	Spithead		Edward VII
1912	Spithead	Coronation	George V
1914	Spithead	WWI mobilisation	George V

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The information contained in this sheet is correct as far as we are able to ascertain from our sources. It is not intended to be an exhaustive or complete history of the subject. Please contact the library for a list of further reading materials, if available

# Library and Information Services



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1919	Southend	WW1 victory	George V
1924	Spithead	Colour Presentation	George V
1935	Spithead	Silver Jubilee	George V
1937	Spithead	Coronation	George VI
1944	Spithead	D-Day Invasion	George VI
1953	Spithead	Coronation	Elizabeth II
1965	Clyde	Partial review	Elizabeth II
1969	Spithead	NATO review	Elizabeth II
1969	Torbay	Colour Presentation	Elizabeth II
1977	Spithead	Silver Jubilee	Elizabeth II
2003	Plymouth	Colour Presentation	Elizabeth II
2005	Spithead	International Fleet Review	Elizabeth II
		- Trafalgar commemoration	