



## Information sheet no 041

# State barge of King Charles II

Built during the reign of Charles II when pageants on water were popular, this is one of three surviving state barges and is on display in the Victory Gallery of the National Museum of the Royal Navy. The barge, or to give it the correct name, shallop, is 35 feet long with a 6 foot 1 inch beam. The barge is carvel built with rounded stem and a lute stern. It has rowlocks for five oars each side. There is a carving on the samson post in the bow and a mermaid swimming on each side of the stem. The coat of arms on the lute stern is the anchor of the Board of Admiralty.

The barge has been used by successive monarchs for river journeys and fleet reviews but was last used on the 8 January 1806 to carry Lord Nelson's body from Greenwich Hospital to the steps of Whitehall for his state funeral at St Paul's Cathedral on the following day. The barge was draped with black velvet over the sides and canopy, topped with mourning plumes and the crew was dressed in mourning. The procession was probably the largest ever to have taken place on the Thames. There were over sixty vessels escorting the funeral barge, including the barges of the Lord Mayor and eight Livery Companies. The NMRN holds an Ackerman print depicting the barge on this occasion. There are also plans of the barge held at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

After this occasion the history of the barge is not known until c.1870 when it was on display underneath the poop of HMS *Victory*. It remained there until the 1920's when it was removed as part of the restoration scheme. In 1938 it was put on display at the National Museum of the Royal Navy.