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Princess Is Rowed To Foudroyant

“SPlice THE MAIN-BRACE” ONLY IN COCOA!

On board the old frigate Foudroyant in Portsmouth Harbour last night, more than 100 Sea Rangers spliced the main-brace – but only in cocoa! - at the express permission of their Commodore, Princess Margaret, who had spent the afternoon with them.

Just before she was piped over the side in a most seamanlike manner, the ship's Superintendent (Commander Kenneth Mitchell) asked the Princess if all on board could celebrate in the traditional way, and Her Royal Highness replied:

“You may certainly splice the main-brace, I have had a most enjoyable time on board.”

And so, at supper, the Rangers “went round the buoy” with their cocoa, and reflected what a wonderful day it had been for them and for the famous ship which is their holiday home.

The Princess had just spent three-quarters of an hour down on the low-pitched main deck – it has an average height of less than six feet – joining in a sing-song with the Rangers under training and those from Portsmouth and district units, who were seated in front of her.

The singing was led by Miss Mary Chater (Head-quarters Commissioner for Music). Several of the songs had actions to them, and the Princess entered whole-heartedly into such fun as pretending to eat hot potatoes and depicting running rabbits with her fingers. Sea shanties included, “What shall we do with a drunken sailor,” “Blow the man down,” “Billy Boy,” and “The Mermaid.” The latter was a favourite of the Princess, it was announced.

Miss Chater had everybody in fits of laughter with a monologue dealing with a watery episode in the life of Sam Small.

“Good-bye”

Throughout the sing-song the Princess was seated on the chair used by Lord Baden-Powell when he wrote his famous book “Scouting for Boys.” Beside her was Miss Sylvia Clarke (Assistant Commissioner for Sea Rangers).

When the singing was ended the Princess called “Goodbye” to the Rangers, and as she left the main deck she commented, “It was a lovely sing-song.”

To 16-year-old Miss Gillian Jefferies, of 2, Yarborough Road, Southsea, fell the distinction of being coxswain of the King's gig, as it is called, in which the Princess was rowed from King's Stairs to the Foudroyant.

Gillian, a member of Portsmouth Sea Ranger Ship Pathfinder, told our reporter: “It was rather rough, and we pitched up and down, but the Princess afterwards told us how much she enjoyed the trip. It was certainly rougher than on any day we had rehearsed.

“It was a great honour to bring the Princess out. We were thrilled when at noon, the Commander-in-Chief sent a signal that the weather was favourable enough for everything to be carried through as planned.”



*Coxswain of the King's gig
Gillian Jefferies*

Gillian is the daughter of Mr. W.A. Jeffries, art master, at the Boys' Southern Grammar School. One of her 11-year-old twin sisters was in the Girl Guides Guard of Honour at King's Stairs.

The Rangers handled their oars in grand style, feathering them expertly during the eight-minute voyage. They were a credit to Lieutenant Michael O'Loughlin, of the Foudroyant, who had superintended their training.

On the Upper Deck

Among the guests on board were the Commander-on-Chief, Portsmouth (whose barge escorted the gig), and Lady Willis, Lady Stratheden (Chief Commissioner), Lady Merthyr (Commissioner for Rangers), and Lieut.-Col. Harold and Mrs. Wyllie.

On the smartly painted upper deck of the Foudroyant the Princess inspected the Rangers, who afterwards manned the three gigs, four whalers, and two dinghies to pull past the ship's starboard side.

Standing at the top of the companionway the Princess took the salute. As the boats passed the coxswains stood and saluted, and the Rangers tossed their oars adroitly. In the harbour there was a changing panorama of ships, as destroyers and the submarine Artemis returned from exercises.

The warships saluted the Foudroyant, which was dressed overall, with the Princess's personal Royal Standard at the main, and a huge 12-yard Red Ensign fluttering majestically at the stern. The Rangers returned the salutes with their bosun's calls.

For tea the Princess and the guests had pieces of an iced cake which had been made in the form of a model of the Foudroyant by a Gosport firm. The Rangers had decorated it with dressing flags and the Royal Standard. Her Royal Highness accepted two of the cake's miniature guns for her nephew Prince Charles.

Just before she left the ship the Princess posed smilingly for a "battery" of small cameras operated by the Rangers. "I hope all the pictures come out all right," she told them.

With her she took a souvenir programme of the day's events, on the cover of which was a painting by Lt.-Col. Wyllie of the Foudroyant as the frigate was in her hey-day under full sail.

Her Royal Highness shook hands with the Guide and Ranger leaders, and when she had embarked in the Commander-in-Chief's barge the Rangers lustily responded to the call, "Three cheers for the Commodore." The Royal Standard was struck in the Foudroyant and hoisted in the barge.

Slowly, as if the Royal visitor was reluctant to leave, the barge nosed its way towards Gosport.



*Wendy Game presents a bouquet to Princess Margaret
After the royal visit to the Foudroyant*

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