

LONDONTROOPING THE COLOUR

Today is the King's day. More truly than any other, the leader of the greatest comity of nations is the servant of his people. Of all the great ceremonies of the year, this alone is for him: and this too he shares with us all. Like us, his family are his guests, to enjoy with him the most colourful display that the ravages of time have spared from the pageantry of the past; the Sovereign's birthday tribute from his Guards: Trooping the Colour.

Only a spectator too is the C-in-C, Western Union Land Forces, General de Lattre de Tassigny, as His Majesty inspects the parade. Colonel of the Scots Guards, the Duke of Gloucester, is in attendance. Inspection over, the King mounts the dais for the march-past...the beginning of the Troop.

The Colour Trooped is that of the 3rd Coldstreams. From earliest days the Colour was the soul of the Regiment: it knit the Regiment together and round it they triumphed or fell. Trooping - the supreme honour to the Colour - impressed it on their memory the better to recognise it in the heat of battle.

Next, led by the mounted band of the Royal Horse Guards, the Sovereign's Escort march past by column of troops. It is now noon, the official moment of the King's Birthday - time for the salute of 62 guns to be fired.

The Parade over (and Royal permission granted for the divisions to march off the duties) His Majesty leads the King's Guard, who are followed by the other Guards. With the massed bands at its head the procession leaves on the return to the Palace.

The Guards' tribute to their Sovereign is ending. Thirteen hundred and fifty officers and men have taken part, including about 450 in the massed bands. In the normal way it was the turn of the Grenadiers, but they stepped down in favour of the Coldstreams, who's tercentenary falls this year. The procession nears the palace. There remains only the final march past ... we have shared with His Majesty something indescribable, inimitable. Something that perhaps we feel even more than we see and hear. Through all the pageantry, we see only the man. And it is the man, as well as his kingship, we salute today as, for the first time on this day of national rejoicing, the Royal Air Force dips in salute.