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MAGAZINE OF THE NIKON WORLD • ISSUE XXXIV • 2011



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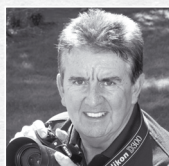
AF-S Nikkor 28-300mm f/3.5-5.6G ED VR Review by Simon Stafford

THE VOYAGE OF THE ROYAL TREADER

by Mike Maloney O.B.E.



MIKE MALONEY, O.B.E.



Britain's
most
decorated
press
photo-
grapher
Mike

Maloney OBE has over 100 major photographic awards to his name. He joined the staff of the *Daily Mirror* in the early Seventies as "Fleet Street's" youngest ever photographer, leaving thirty-two years later to work as a freelance.

During his time on the newspaper he visited most countries in the world meeting film stars, kings, queens and heads of state.

He was awarded a fellowship from the Royal Photographic Society and a doctorate from Lincoln University – his home town.

In 2006 he became the first "Fleet Street" photographer ever to be awarded the OBE by The Queen for services to photo-journalism.



THE QUEEN'S FLOATING PALACE

I remember that dreadful day – 11th December 1997 when Her Majesty's Yacht Britannia was decommissioned in Portsmouth in the presence of The Queen, Prince Philip and other members of the Royal Family.

Observing the Queen with my binoculars, I could see the tears welling in her eyes. Not something I have ever seen before in forty years of royal 'watching'.

The decision to end the 43-year life of Britannia was

announced in Parliament by the then Secretary of State for Defence, Malcolm Rifkind.

One of the great thrills of travelling with the Royal Family was to be invited aboard the Royal Yacht Britannia. She was the most luxurious sea-going vessel I have ever had the pleasure of boarding. The floors (made from teak from the forests of Burma) were so spotless and clean, you could literally eat your food off them.

On a royal trip the Royal Yacht Britannia would usually visit many ports of call all over the world.

In Australia, for instance, the Britannia would call at Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney; four ports and four lavish parties. Sadly, I have no photographic records of these amazing cocktail parties because reporting and photography were strictly forbidden.

I am often asked how members of the press were invited in the first place.

The editors of the various national newspapers decided which member of his staff he intended to send on a royal visit – the names were then given to Buckingham Palace and a Palace official would vet the individuals that have been selected.

Observing the Queen with my binoculars, I could see the tears welling in her eyes. Not something I have ever seen before in forty years of royal 'watching'.

It was known for Buckingham Palace to refuse certain members of the press for a variety of reasons. Thankfully, I was never refused!

THE LOVE BOAT



The Britannia, over the years, was used for four honeymoons, starting in 1960 with the wedding of Princess Margaret and Antony Armstrong-Jones when the Yacht took them on a 6,000 mile voyage to the Caribbean. In 1973 it was the turn of Princess Anne and Captain Mark Phillips cruising the West Indies; Prince Charles and Diana were the third couple to enjoy the delights of the Royal Yacht Britannia for their sixteen-day honeymoon voyage in the Mediterranean, and finally in 1986 The Duke and Duchess of York who spent five days aboard the Yacht cruising around the Azores. Unfortunately, all of the weddings ended in divorce.

A couple of funny stories spring to mind; actually many stories spring to mind, but most of them I can't write about, for obvious reasons.

Antony Armstrong-Jones had a pet name for Princess Margaret, on the Yacht ... DUCKY!

Can you imagine hearing AAJ shouting on the deck:

"Ducky would you like a cup of tea?" much to the amusement of the crew?

Like Her Majesty, Princess Margaret always spoke very fondly of travelling on the Yacht. The drawing room housed a really magnificent grand piano, which she played. Incidentally, the most accomplished pianists in the Royal Family were Princess Diana, Princess Margaret and Princess Alexandra.

Princess Margaret once told me of a most wonderful evening on board when she

invited Noel Coward to dine with her during a Caribbean cruise. After the sumptuous dinner Noel was invited to play and sing for the Princess.

"He played mostly his own work, but we did enjoy a couple of memorable hours," she said.

The piano was the centre of another interesting evening in 1981 but not the one in the drawing room.

I was privileged to be with Princess Diana at London's Guildhall a few years ago (I was an invited guest on the other end of the camera





for a change) and when the conversation got round to the Britannia, she talked a little about the first weeks of her honeymoon on board, and how she went "walkabout" away from the royal quarters.

She said she found herself in the staff mess and was invited to have a drink or two. A little while later she was sitting at their piano playing "Greensleeves"¹ before inviting

THE ROYAL JOKER

Over the past thirty years I enjoyed many wonderful evenings on board. One particularly memorable visit was the 1981 visit to Sri Lanka, Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania. I travelled with The Queen and Prince Philip for over three months – an incredibly long overseas visit, the like of which will never be seen again.

She is the only yacht in the world painted navy blue and the gold stripe all the way around the ship is real gold.

the crew to join her with a very noisy rendition of "What shall we do with the Drunken Sailor"².

Diana said that two members of the crew had to escort her back to the Royal Apartments of the Yacht. I gathered from this conversation that quite a few drinks were consumed!

Accompanied by my Fleet Street colleagues, all ten of them, I was encouraged to be the first photo-journalist to tell The Queen one of my funny stories which I had entertained my colleagues with during many long boring hours of waiting around for the Royal Party to appear.



◇ Painting of Admiral Nelson with his signature

"No! I won't tell HRH a joke or a funny story – she may not laugh or find it funny. In any case, I don't want to be locked-up in The Tower of London," I said.

Now I don't know whether it was the large gin and tonics that were being served or just my jovial nature but I found myself regaling The Queen with a story from the previous night.

"Hello Mr. Maloney, how are you?" said The Queen

It really is a photographer's dream with literally hundreds of exhibits to shoot, from the beautiful rooms, exciting nooks and crannies, to a magnificent painting of Nelson with his signature below the picture.

"Very well, Ma'am," I replied. "And how are you enjoying the food in Australia," she added.

"Most enjoyable Ma'am," I replied, again remembering to call Her Majesty, Ma'am, rhyming with Pam, and not Marm, which she dislikes.

"We visited a Chinese restaurant where the waiters don't speak much English," I said.

"Oh really," replied The Queen.

"I had to use sign language to order the food," I told her.

"I would like some cluck, cluck, soup" (waving my arms around like a demented chicken). Can you believe I would act this way, right in front of The Queen?

"Ah! You want Chicken soup," exclaimed the waiter.

"No! Mushroom," I replied.

"Why you make sound like Chicken?" (Again frantically waving my arms around) asked the waiter.

"Because I can't make a sound like a mushroom," I added.

Bearing in mind that HRH was just two feet in front of me – there was a long pause which seemed to go on for ages; I was hearing the Tower of London cell door closing behind me when suddenly the Queen burst out laughing and, as she often does, started rocking backwards and forwards on her heels, at which point all the officials around her also started to rock in the same manner.

A narrow escape!

The Royal Yacht Britannia is now moored in Leith near Edinburgh as a tourist attraction. I think it must be one of the best attractions in the U.K.

She is the only yacht in the world painted navy blue and the gold stripe all the way around the ship is real gold.

When I used to be invited onto the yacht I only ever saw three rooms: the drawing room, the ante-room and the dining room.

Now visitors to the yacht can view, and take photographs of, every room including: The Queen's bedroom, Prince Philip's bedroom and the honeymoon suite.

I would heartedly recommend a visit to the Royal Yacht if you get the chance. It really is a photographer's dream with literally hundreds of exhibits to shoot, from the beautiful rooms, exciting nooks and crannies, to a magnificent painting of Nelson with his signature below the picture. ■



OFFICER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

I remember that wonderful day in 2005 when HM The Queen presented me with the O.B.E. at Buckingham Palace. As you probably know, she is a very keen photographer, owning many cameras and I have had the great pleasure of discussing photography with her on a few occasions.

I was convinced that photography would be the

subject of our chat after she had pinned the 'gong'³ to my chest.

The whole of the two and a half minutes* were taken up with The Queen telling me how much she missed the Royal Yacht and all the really happy times she had enjoyed with her family.

I couldn't help myself from saying: *"Me too, Your Majesty – me too!"*





❖ Drawing room on the The Royal Yacht Britannia, 1973



❖ The Queen's bedroom

... Britannia is one of the world's most famous ships. Launched at John Brown's Shipyard in Clydebank in 1953, the Royal Yacht proudly served Queen and country for forty-four years.

'Recipients at an award ceremony are usually only allocated thirty seconds of The Queen's time.

Definitions

¹"Greensleeves" is a traditional English folk song and tune

²"What Should We Do with the Drunken Sailor?" is a famous traditional sea shanty (work song) also known as "Drunken Sailor?"

³Gong: British slang for a medal, especially a military one

The Royal Yacht Britannia is one of the world's most famous ships. Launched at John Brown's Shipyard in Clydebank in 1953, the Royal Yacht proudly served Queen and country for forty-

four years. During that time Britannia carried The Queen and the Royal Family on 968 official voyages, from the remotest regions of the South Seas to the deepest divides of Antarctica.

As 83rd in a long line of Royal Yachts that stretches back to 1660 and the reign of Charles II, Britannia holds a proud place in British maritime history. On 16th April 1953, Her Majesty's Yacht Britannia rolled down the slipway at John Brown's Clydebank Shipyard, on the start of her long and illustrious career. Commissioned for service in January 1954, Britannia sailed the oceans for 43 years and 334 days. She travelled a total of 1,087,623 nautical miles, calling at over 600 ports in 135 countries.

In June 1994, the Government announced that Her Majesty's Yacht Britannia would be taken out of service. At the beginning of January 1997, Britannia set sail from Portsmouth to Hong Kong on her last and longest voyage. On 11th December 1997 Britannia was decommissioned at Portsmouth Naval Base in the presence of The Queen, The Duke of Edinburgh and twelve senior members of the Royal Family. Some 2,200 Royal Yacht Officers and Yachtsmen, together with their families, came to witness the ceremony.

Four months later, after intense competition from cities around the UK, the Government announced that Edinburgh had been

successful in its bid to become her new home. She is now owned by The Royal Britannia Trust, a charitable organisation whose sole remit is the maintenance of Britannia in keeping with her former role. Britannia is now permanently moored in Edinburgh's historic port of Leith and visitors can discover what life was like on board the ship for the Royal Family and crew. Britannia is now a five-star visitor attraction and one of the UK's most prestigious corporate hospitality venues.

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