

# Prince Philip in Portugal

By Edward Godfrey

Following the death of Prince Philip on 9 April, no doubt many of the older members of the Society will have been reminiscing about the two state visits of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip to Portugal in 1957 and 1985.

The 1957 visit took place between Monday and Thursday, 18 to 21 February. At the time of the visit the Queen's husband had the title His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh but, immediately on the couple's return to London, he was granted the style and title of a Prince of the United Kingdom by Letters Patent, and became known as His Royal Highness Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.



First visit to Lisbon

This was a return visit in response to the Portuguese presidential couple's state visit to Britain in 1955. State visits usually have an underlying political agenda and in the 1957 visit Britain wished to reinforce strategic links with Portugal as an important NATO ally, the facilities in the Azores being particularly important. It was also necessary to obtain Portugal's support over the matter of Gibraltar, which Franco's Spain wanted back. Britain's foreign policy at this time was driven by the Cold War and Portugal's lack of democracy was preferable to the alternative of communism.

The Queen landed at the Montijo airbase and then travelled to Setúbal to join the Royal Yacht *Britannia*, where she was re-united with the Duke who had just completed a four-month world tour in the *Britannia*. *Britannia* then set sail for the short journey round the coast to Lisbon and dropped anchor in front of the Terreiro do Paço. The Portuguese royal barge (bergantim), powered by some 50 oarsmen, came alongside and ferried the couple to Terreiro do Paço where they were greeted by President Craveiro Lopes and his wife. A public holiday had been declared and thousands of men, women and children were there, keen to see the young Queen and her handsome husband. The royal barge had ferried King Edward VII ashore 54 years earlier and can be seen today at the Museu da Marinha in Belém.

During the visit the Queen and the Duke used the palace at Queluz as their official residence and it was here that 200 children of the "British colony" were received. The highlight of the visit for members of Portuguese "society" was a Gala Performance at the São Carlos theatre where the ladies wore their most glittering jewelry over shimmering gowns. The programme for the visit included a very full one-day visit

to Alcobaça, Batalha, Nazaré, and Vila Franca, and to Porto on the final day from where the royal couple returned by BEA to London.

During the visit the couple separated for one morning, the Queen visiting the Bairro Social de Restelo, referred to in an English publication as the Restelo Garden Suburb, and the Duke toured the naval training ship *Sagres* and visited the Royal British Club, then located in Rua de S. Pedro de Alcantara. Here he signed the visitor's book and agreed to become the Club's Patron.

The 1985 visit took place between Tuesday and Friday, 26 to 29 March. The president of Portugal was General Ramalho Eanes and the prime minister was Dr. Mário Soares. The Queen and Prince Philip arrived again at Montijo, and again joined the *Britannia* at Setúbal. This time the Lisbon arrival point was in front of the Torre de Belém. The Portuguese royal barge was obviously not available as the royal couple's transfer from *Britannia* to shore was effected by *Britannia*'s royal barge.

As well as the usual social events, the couple visited Sintra, Evora and St. Julian's School, and attended a music and dance performance at the Dona Maria II theatre. Porto was visited on the final day, and they returned to London by BA. There was no time for Prince Philip to visit the Royal British Club.

This omission was rectified however when he visited Lisbon, without the Queen, on 28 November 1988. He attended a lunchtime reception at the Royal British Club, now located in Rua da Estrela, almost 150 members being present. D'Arcy Orders' official history "The Royal British Club, Lisbon, 1888-1988" records Prince Philip signing the visitors' book and quipping "You don't seem to have many visitors here" – his was the last previous name there, signed of course during the State Visit on 18 February 1957. He also had lunch at the Ritz as guest of the British-Portuguese Chamber of Commerce.

Prince Philip made a private visit to the Azores in March 1991, visiting several of the islands informally. On the final day he visited the town of Furnas on São Miguel where lunch was offered by Dr. João Bosco Mota Amaral, first president of the Regional Government of the Azores.



In the Azores