

It is apparent to D.S.D. that confusion exists, both in the minds of the public and in official circles, concerning the correct application of the above terms and in particular "wearing" and "flying" in relation to ensigns and command flags in ships and on shore.

2. D.S.D.'s view is supported by the varying ways in which the terms are applied in Q.R. and A.I., examples of which are given in Appendix B. Furthermore, a number of letters published in "The Mariners Mirror" dated October, 1951, (Pages 328 and 329), and more recently in the "Times" (See Appendix A) bear witness to keen public interest in the matter.

3. It is clearly possible to quote numerous contradictory historical references in support of either of the terms "Flying" or "wearing", but the consensus of opinion evidently is, that a ship wears a flag and an individual flies it. It is relevant to note also that, on N.L. 2056/51, the Fourth Sea Lord, on 15th August, 1951, wrote "An Officer flies his flag in a ship or shore establishment. A shore establishment flies a flag but a ship wears it". (Note: 4th Sea Lord's decision does not specifically refer to ensigns though this is implied.)

4. It is generally accepted that the ensign and jack are regarded as a "suit of colours" and as the flag of an Admiral, the broad pendant of a Commodore and/or the commissioning pendant are flown (worn) continuously day and night, D.S.D. considers that they also should be recognised as forming part of the "suit" which is worn by a ship.

5. D.S.D. has no quarrel with the term "hoisting" as such, but considers that "hoisting" implies some physical action. In the interests of simplicity and consistency, D.S.D. therefore, recommends that it be replaced by "flying" where applicable.

6. The word "display", as used in Q.R. and A.I. article 112, does, however, enable a differentiation to be made when speaking of flags which, though not signal flags in themselves, do convey information of a temporary character. (e.g. the display of the Blue Ensign while saluting a British Consular Officer). D.S.D. considers that this term should be retained.

7. D.S.D. is not in favour of a solemn Public pronouncement which would inevitably give rise to further good natured levity from the Press, but does consider that a decision based on 4th Sea Lord's N.L. 2056/51, 15th August, 1951 including a definition of a ship's "suit of colours" should be made and promulgated within the Service. D.S.D. has indicated in Appendix B, the manner in which he considers relevant Articles in Q.R. and A.I. should be amended.

R. S. Forlin Brown

DIRECTOR OF SIGNAL DIVISION.

22nd September, 1953.

APPENDIX A

Extract from "The Times" dated 31st August, 1953.

"WEARING" A FLAG

THE EXPERTS DISAGREE

By Our Naval Correspondent

The letter to The Times from Captain Russel Grenfell deploring the re-introduction into naval parlance of the term "to wear" a flag has provoked much correspondence. A number of correspondents, including Admiral Sir Walter Cowan, support Captain Grenfell's view.

Mr. Peter Scott Pringle asserts that Captain Grenfell is etymologically right in maintaining that an admiral can wear a flag only by wrapping it round him, the root of the word being of Indo-European stock: the Sanskrit "Vastra" and the Welsh "Gwisg", which connote "external covering". On these grounds, however, it might be possible for ships to "wear" sails, or possibly flags.

Among those who disagree with Captain Grenfell, Commander (S) A. W. B. Messenger writes that the objection is entirely uncalled for and that it is wrong to say the phrase has only recently appeared officially. He quotes King James's proclamation of 1606, which includes the words: "...Our Subjects of South Britain shall wear the Red Cross..."; and the 1908 edition of the Manual of Seamanship: "All H.M. Ships in commission when not bearing a flag or broad pendant are to wear at one masthead a pendant..."

Commander S. H. S. Moxley writes that Captain Grenfell is not substantially correct when he says that the term "wear" for flying a flag is not mentioned in Nelson's letters. Reporting the affair of the Commodore's broad pendant flying in the Latona at English Harbour, Nelson did say: "As her captain was junior to me, I sent to know the reason for her wearing it." Hawke, some 30 years before, had written to the Admiralty: "For no consequences that can attend the striking of it (a flag) without orders shall ever outbalance with me the wearing of it one moment without discredit." Nevertheless, Commander Moxley maintains that, apart from such examples, the word has been used in only 1 per cent. of writings, including official dispatches, between the days of Pepys and these last few years.

In current naval usage an Admiral "flies" his flag in a particular ship, but the ship itself "wears" the flag.

Extract from "The Times" dated 26th August, 1953.

"WEARING" A FLAG

Sir, - Now that the expression of a man-of-war "wearing" an admiral's flag has made its appearance in an official history of the war, may I vent the hope that this horrible term be relegated to an innocuous desuetude before it becomes sanctified by further official countenance? "Wearing" a flag was an unknown term when I joined the Navy early this century, the invariable word then used being "flying". "Wearing" is not to be found in Nelson's letters and dispatches, though he sometimes spoke of a ship "bearing my flag".

My recollection is that "wearing" was disinterred from ancient obscurity by some pseudo-traditionalist during the last war and foisted on a Navy that did not want it. The great objection to it is its complete unsuitability. When an admiral announces "I shall fly my flag in H.M.S. So-and-So" the sailor feels that way of putting it to be wholly felicitous. But for him to say "I shall wear my flag..." conjures up a picture of an elderly and portly officer standing on the quarterdeck wrapped round with a voluminous St. George's Cross rather like a Roman Emperor.

Your obedient servant,

RUSSELL GRENFELL.

Wick House,
Downton,
Salisbury.

Extract from "The Times" dated 3rd September, 1953.FLAG-WEAR

Many a timid landsman must have found the recent correspondence as to the propriety or otherwise of "wearing" a flag most refreshing to his spirits. He is naturally a little frightened of sailors and particularly on the highly technical subject of flags. If on some loyal or patriotic occasion he proposes to adorn his own modest dwelling with a flag, he is terrified out of his wits lest some sailor should come along and cock one contemptuous nautical eye at it; he knows that he will have put the confounded thing upside down - he is even a little nervous about it as a button-hole on flag day. Therefore he is considerably cheered to find these sailors, "wery fierce" as they always are, attacking not him but one another. In particular he enjoys their fine ill-disciplined fury. It was a captain who began it and yet two commanders fall boldly upon him, and inferentially on the Admiral who, we gather, has supported his views. He is likewise full of admiration for another correspondent, apparently a mere landsman like himself, who dares to joke etymologically about an admiral wearing a flag by wrapping it round him. What a pleasantly rotund picture! He begins to think that he will never be quite so frightened of sailors again.

It may be, of course, that his flag-terror is not really inspired by sailors at all, but goes far farther back into his childhood's days; that it is due to some inhibition or suppression - psycho-analysts will know the right word - due to an early study of Struwwelpeter. Those who know the picture will remember that the naughty little boys who laughed at the poor blackamoor were all wearing flags, and that when Tall Agrippa dipped them in his mighty inkstand they emerged the blackest little miseries. It was a dreadful punishment, but it was the spoiling of those lovely red and green flags that was the hardest to bear. That left an impression which has never faded. And yet if flags can revive terrifying memories, so they can also bring back supremely happy ones. There must be many of us who can recall with an exquisite thrill the great Atlas, at the beginning of which were two pages of the flags of all nations. It was the kind of book that dwells in some romantically secret spot, behind the sofa or under the piano, so that the seeker crept to it on all fours, and once there remained entranced during the whole of one wet afternoon. What glorious combinations of stripes were there! What crosses, what eagles, what elephants! In any poetry that we knew, those flags were never worn, but they flew and they blew most beautifully.

A P P E N D I X B

Citation and source	D.S.D.'s remarks
Q.R. and A.I. Art. 39. Refers to the <u>wearing</u> of the Royal Standard by H.M. Ships and Vessels.	"Wearing" correctly used.
Q.R. and A.I. Art. 42. The Royal standard <u>hoisted</u> on shore	More correctly "is flying onshore"
Q.R. and A.I. Art. 75. Refers variously to H.M. Ships <u>wearing</u> a flag or broad pendant and in the note to the article refers to <u>Captain</u> not authorised to <u>fly</u> a broad pendant.	Terms "wearing" and "flying" correctly applied here.
Q.R. and A.I. Art. 93. The term "wearing" is used throughout.	Correctly used.
Q.R. and A.I. Art. 94. Flags <u>hoisted</u> during salutes.	The term " <u>displayed</u> " is preferred in that the flag is displayed for the period of the gun salute only.
Q.R. and A.I. Art. 101. The Admiralty Flag is <u>worn</u> by ships.	"Worn" correctly used.
Q.R. and A.I. Arts. 102, 103, 105 and 106, state that the Officers concerned shall <u>wear</u> their flags.	"Flying" (fly) is the correct term here.
Q.R. and A.I. Art. 109. authorises an officer entitled to <u>wear</u> a flag, etc. afloat to <u>fly</u> the same flag, etc., on shore.	"Fly" should be used throughout.
Q.R. and A.I. Art. 111. A mixture of the terms " <u>hoisting</u> " and " <u>wearing</u> ".	Preferrable to use "wearing" (worn) throughout.
Q.R. and A.I. Art. 118. All H.M. Ships in commission ... are to <u>fly</u> at the main masthead a pendant..."	"Wear" should be used.
Q.R. and A.I. Art. 122 is entitled " <u>Wearing</u> the ensign in boats" and goes on to instruct boats when and how to <u>fly</u> their ensigns.	Either "Wear" or "Fly" should be used entirely. D.S.D. prefers "fly".