
“DIP THE ENSIGN”

In May 1554, the Spanish Fleet of 160 sail, escorting their King on his way to England for his marriage with Queen Mary, fell in with the British Fleet in the approaches to the Channel. The first incident was that the Spanish Flagship received a round of shot from Lord Howard's flagship. The King of Spain had neglected to pay the customary marks of respects to the British Flag.

The regulations of the period stated that H.M. Ships of War required all merchant ships and foreign warships encountered in Home Waters to salute by striking their topsails and taking in their colours. However, these regulations have long since lapsed,

and today the custom of dipping the ensign survives purely as an act of courtesy and recognition.

The interest taken by the public in this ancient custom of the sea is never more evident than during Cowes Week, as was shown by the many reports and letters in both local and national press this year. The cause of comment was the alleged failure of the United States liner *America* to dip to the Royal Yacht *Britannia*, under such headings as, "Did liner snub *Britannia*?". Captain Taprell Dorling, R.N. (Retd.), better known as author and broadcaster 'Taffrail', wrote to the TIMES, saying she had failed to dip to both *Britannia* and *Tiger*. Another writer refuted this, but a third agreed with 'Taffrail'. The Captain of *Tiger*, Captain P. W. W. Graham, had the last word in his letter to the TIMES in which he stated that the *America* definitely dipped to *Britannia* but "She had only just rehoisted by the time she was passing *Tiger*, and did not dip to us (presumably because she felt it was too late)".

You may still find yourself the centre of a storm in the press, so look lively—DIP THE ENSIGN.