

This is an OS Map of Portsea a part of Portsmouth in which there are many naval assets and places of great interest. It is reproduced by permission of the National Library of Scotland, so it has a copyright!

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I suggest that you have a good look at the map first shown to you before you start zooming in for greater detail. You will see a part of the Royal Dockyard shown in white upper left, because back then everything was much more secret than today. There are many aspects which are very different to what we see today whilst walking around the city, and in Portsea in particular, so I will point them out to you to begin with. Note in the lower half the railway stations just the same as they are today 'Town' right and 'Harbour' left. However the railroad tracks to and through them are very different.

Take the lower route first. Note that just before the Harbour station the track branches off to the right and continues on into the

dockyard via the swing bridge: that part of the track is single. The track in the dockyard is not shown - more secrets? The swing bridge was used to allow small craft, powered and sail, the majority privately owned, access to the harbour and back to the Hard, by sailing through a gap at right angles to the rail track created when the bridge was swung across the track barring the way of the train to reach SRJ. The train was allowed to continue when the movement of the small vessels had been concluded and the bridge swung back into its continuity position. The sea wall you see ahead of the swing bridge has the well known berths of SRJ (South Railway Jetty), BHJ (Boat House Jetty), PHJ (Pitch House Jetty). In the 19th century we had three primary naval branches, the warring fleets, the trooping ships and the transportation ships.

SRJ had two primary purposes which were to berth the troop ships bound for South African for the Boer War and The Indian Raj which led it to be called farewell jetty, and this took six large troop ships fully manned by the Royal Navy to service these requirements, often requiring the use of the BHJ and PHJ. Its second function was to use SRJ (and others when more than one Royal Yacht was required by the Queen and her family). The Queen rode this route when to'ing and fro'ing from central London to Portsmouth, but when enroute to Osborne House from Windsor Castle , her home on the Isle of Wight, she would use the Windsor & Eton Riverside railway station which arrived privately direct into the Royal Station at Clarence Victualling Depot Gosport. From there she would board a Royal Yacht moored alongside with a huge red carpet, for the Island\*. When neither the Queen nor the RN Trooping Service required the jetties, the senior officer afloat would demand the berth. For \* see end of story.

You can clearly see that the single track ran on an elevated section carried over (and over where the Warrior is berthed today) on stilts which reduced in height as the rail track approached the jetty: these stilts and a few parts of the tracks were evident even in the 1960's. Many thousands of British troops often with their

families and family jewels crossed that bridge-head often to an unknown future.

The RN Transport ships were the forerunners of the RFA service and transported around the world all manner of cargo's both materiel and personnel. In the earliest times of their service they were often involved in the slaving trade, but after slavery was outlawed, they were often engaged in seeking out erring captains who continued the wicked trade for self gain: when caught red-handed the transporter ships would take the slaves and deliver them back from whence they came, and the CO of the transporter had the option of sinking the rogue trader leaving her evil crew to the mercy of the sea, or arresting it, taking it back to an official British port for confiscating and civil punishment for her crew. The 'transporter' was also famous or infamous (whatever one's view) for taking convicted criminals to Botany Bay, Australia, to serve out their deportation judgements. Both 'trooping' and 'transporting' were unpopular, but the sanity of the officers complemented to these vessels was maintained because, they could apply for an appointment to the warring fleets, a much better job back with their core of brother officers, when other officers would have to take their turn in the less attractive naval branches. Now let's return to the Town station. From there you can see a track heading north to the boundary of the dockyard, skirting Unicorn Road and stopping alongside a Catholic church. This was a much more robust line built on terra firma throughout its distance, and it conveyed heavy goods into the dockyard railway system. Later on, in approximately 1911, they re-laid this track now with a branch line going directly into the Royal Naval Barracks, still called the army Barracks.

I remember the main R.N.B system well. These were main-line massive great locomotives and not the dockyard-type Thomas-the-tank-engines that sailors in dockyards were used to seeing and riding on! (Whilst here, note Queens Street was called Anglesey Road back then and the Army Barracks were named after the road - now when

it became Queens Street why weren't the Naval Barracks called Queens what a hoot that would have been?)

It was common practice that ships commissioned and decommissioned two to three years later having kept their crews throughout, so at the beginning, ships company's were drafted en-bloc from their Depot to a ship, say in Rosyth yard, and they would board the train at the top end of barracks quite near to the dockyard boundary curtain wall, overseen directly by an RN RTO (Rail Transport Officer) instead of a railway official, the train having secure and dedicated stowage for the usual kit we all had to drag about and even through the London underground, which was a large kit bag, a large suitcase known as a "pussers green", a small brown attache case (by choice), a lashed hammock and often an oilskin. For a cruiser for example, the phalanx of men could total up to 800, and the Admiralty-funded train was ours and ours alone, a troop-train, except for a few marines and soldiers also travelling to a Scottish destination. In the earliest of days, all trains were corridor-less without toilets, although classified 1st class to 4th class when commissioned officers complemented to the ship travelled 1st class, warrant officers and chief petty officers 2nd class, gun room cadets and midshipmen 3rd class, PO's (of both classes) and below, 4th class. Later on corridor trains were introduced (with toilets) but the classes remained. I remember that we all had giant-sized bagged lunches, many having been gobbled-up before we had hurriedly passed through the Fareham station, waved through because, yes, we were bloody important young men! The route was always the same for Scotland, taking in Salisbury, Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester, Carlisle, Edinburgh and Inverkeithing. The same applied on decommissioning if not done alongside in Portsmouth, and a train load of sailors would arrive in HMS Victory unstressed by not having to change stations with all the kits and nausea involved.

Returning to the main screen, next we look at the mid section.

We have already mentioned Anglesey Barracks, but note how little of the allotted footprint has been used? However, look over to the right and you will see the massive drill shed and army 'things' just above it which the soldiers used. By 1905, the area had become HMS Victory RNB Portsmouth commanded by Combrax Portsmouth, just about the only commodores in the navy at that time with Devonport and Chatham also having a Combrax for their respective barracks. Today, it appears that there are as many commodores as there as captains. Out of interest only. For many years the area in and around Southsea Pier had been a magnet for wild night life in the city. Eventually it got out of hand, and we lived in Southsea at the time in a seaside luxury apartment in the old Royal Marines Eastney Barracks, and saw much of it whilst driving along the Southsea front heading for home late at night.

Somehow, although I can't correctly commit myself to paper on it, but Redknapp, the so-called football manager, was involved with property in that area. Enough was enough so the Portsmouth Council turned the Connaught Drill Shed into the city's largest night club imposing many restrictions especially upon the attire of what manifestly were shameless girls, and young women as drunk as any jack-me-tickler-tape was in my youthful days? That's probably because it was in near proximity to the City's Catholic Cathedral just off Edinburgh Road!

The block immediately below comprising the Hospital, the Royal Engineers Barracks, Town Hall, United Service Sports Grounds and Victoria Park are next in line for examination. The Town Hall (City Hall?) became more crowded, with the addition of a huge WW1 Memorial (later adding WW2 names and symbols) for the fallen of Portsmouth people, not for the navy unless those who died were actually from the City, owned property in the city, or had lived in the city before the war: that was addressed by the major naval cenotaph on Southsea Common. Victoria Park always an interesting and restful interlude close by to a frenetic naval hub, was filled to the brim with

monuments and memorials to the brave and hardy of the Victoria era. All, to my uncertain knowledge pre-date the 20th century, some of the last reflecting the first Boer War and the Opium Wars in China. It got a name for a meeting place for down and outs, but I am very fussy about who I sit with and pass the time of day with, and I never had a bad or even iffy experience.

The U.S. Sports pitches and the revered and super cricket ground alongside I knew well, and I wish I had a pound note for each hour I spent there watching cricket of all levels, but particularly when Hampshire CCC played there. Like most county's they had at least two grounds and Hampshire second was over in the Southampton area. When I lived in Southsea, I was often to be found at the lovely and peaceful cricket ground at the Rose Bowl during the cricket season. When not there, Surrey's second ground at Guildford, small and on a main road, although always suiting my needs, was a poor relation to the Oval, Surrey's main and to be envied arena.

That leaves just the "Station Hospital" which was more famously known as the "Garrison Hospital", Portsmouth, remember, being more of an army town than a naval town with all the many fortifications around the metropolis being manned by soldiers in the main. Field Marshall Montgomery was, as a younger and more junior officer, once the Portsmouth Garrison's Commander. The new RNB on Queen Street had no room for its many officers most of whom were bachelors, so it was decided that the Garrison Hospital should be knocked down and the site cleared for the beautiful building you see today, which I understand, is due to be sacrificed any time soon. A new site was found at the foot of Portsdown Hill on the edge of the city, and then a naval vote, tacked on to the build cost of RNB Portsmouth and its across the road Wardroom was agreed, and work started on the building of a larger hospital designed to serve the city to be called the Queen Alexandra Hospital, now extended to a size not thought possible at the beginning of the 20th century. The naval-

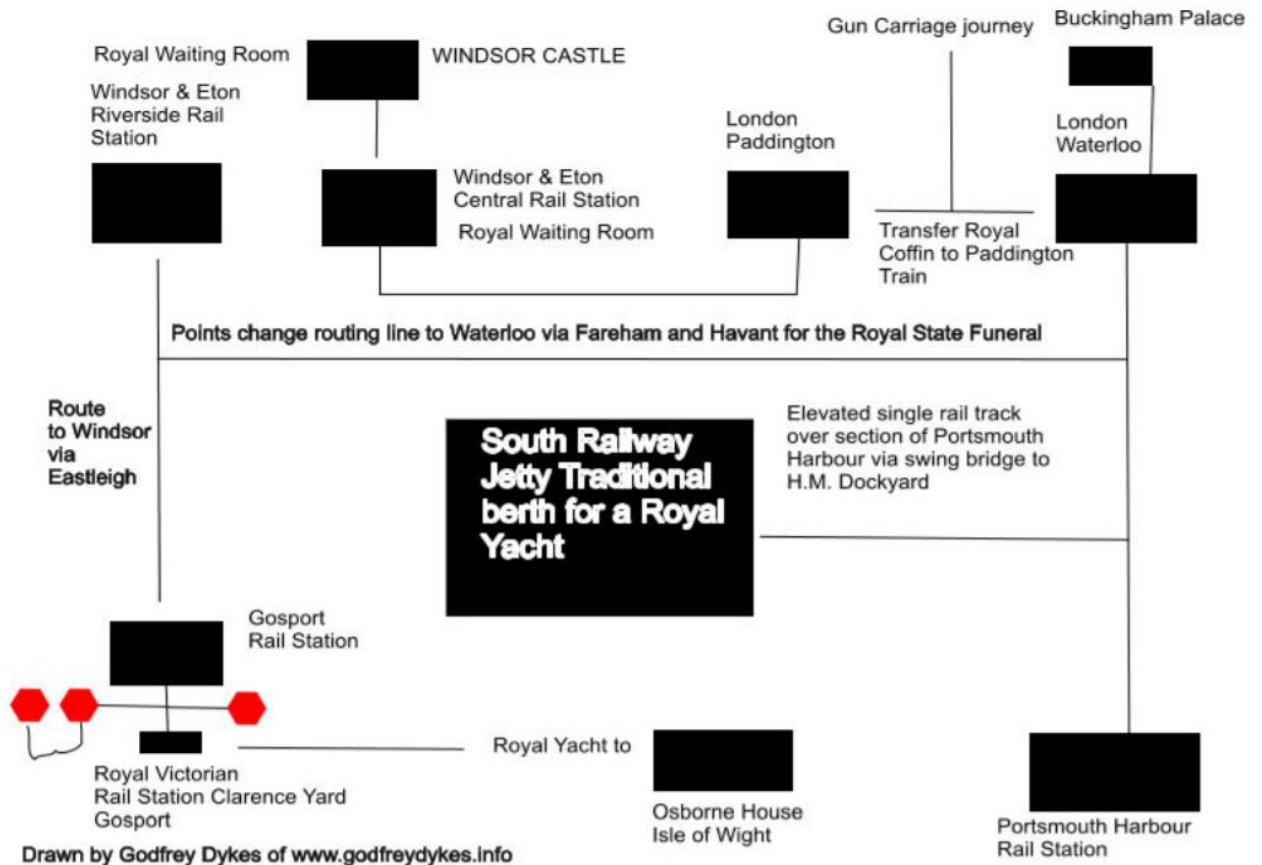
barrack-build overall took away all army barracks in the area including the Royal Engineers called Mill Dam.

\*I don't think that the following was ever mentioned but I can just imagine the 'hurt' felt on the Portsmouth side of the harbour when the deceased Queen Victoria arrived in the Royal Yacht 'Alberta' entering the harbour, going straight to the Royal Clarence Yard Victualling Depot across on the Gosport Side of the harbour, and not to Portsmouth's South Railway Jetty. All the guns in the area, ship and shore, fired gun salutes with the minute gun pre-eminent, from the moment the Alberta sailed from Osborne Bay (in which Queen Victoria used to swim in her bathing machine) to its arrival in Clarence Yard.

The reason for this was not well understood by all, and you will understand why in a moment! The deaths of the nobility in Victorian times was doubly hard for women to cope with than for men, because no woman was allowed to attend a funeral as a mourner especially at the midpoint of her reign. This included the Queen herself and she was debarred from attending the funeral of her beloved Prince Albert in Windsor and Frogmore. Moreover, Royal funerals took place in Windsor/Windsor Castle and on London's thoroughfares, with Westminster Abbey holding a service which coincided with the State Funeral service being held in St Georges Chapel Windsor Castle. However, on this occasion, the train carrying the body of the deceased Queen, instead of taking its normal route to Windsor via Eastleigh had to divert to make sure it arrived at the intended station and this could have been done just as easily from Portsmouth!

It is reasonably complicated, so I have drawn a sketch of the building blocks involved which I hope solves any doubts or misunderstandings. Direction arrows are not needed. The 'points change' for the State Funeral was a one-off in one direction only. On this occasion the train carrying the body of the deceased Queen,

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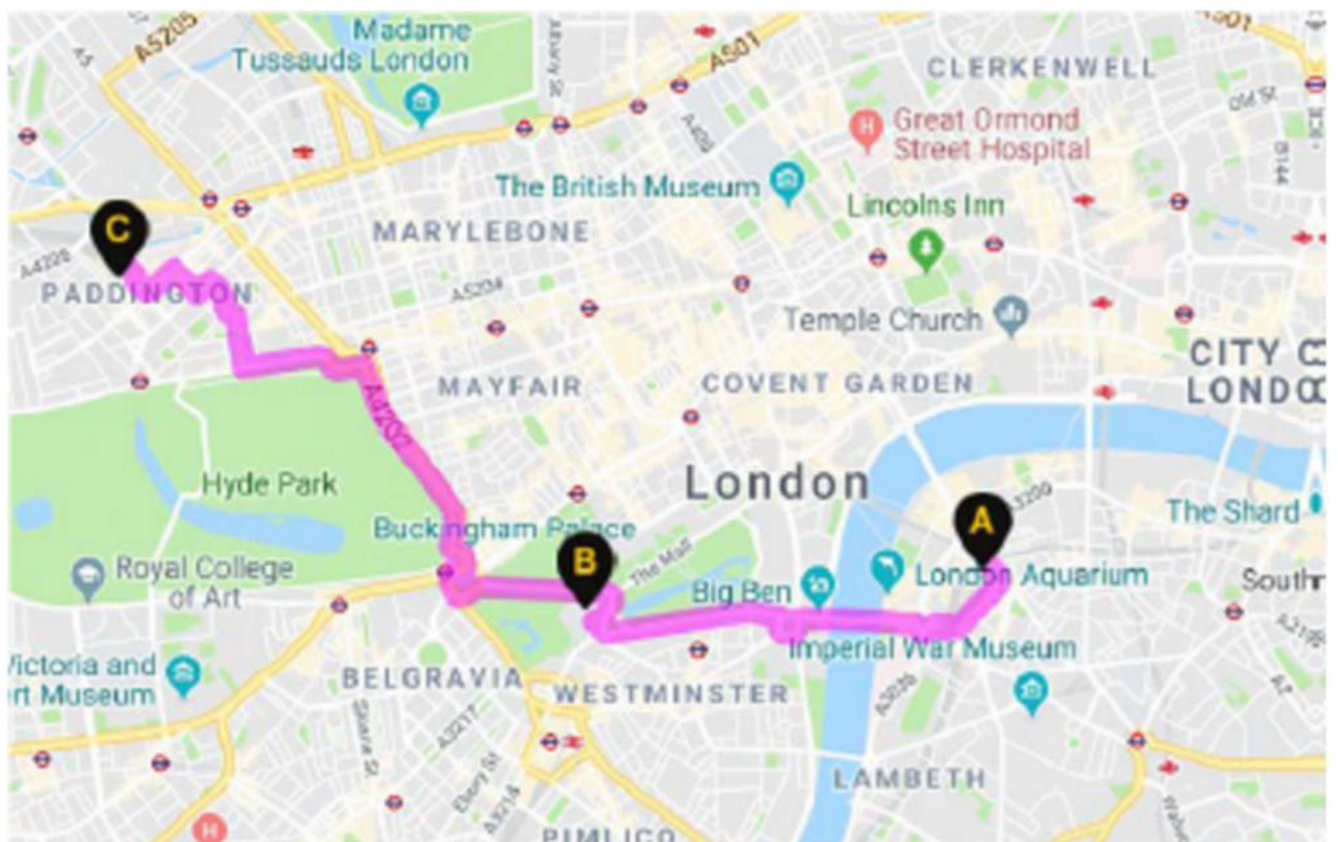


The first thing to note is that at Windsor there are two railway stations each served by different lines and company's. One is some distance and down hill at river level from the Castle where all ceremonies are conducted, and called Windsor & Eton Riverside Rail and the other called Windsor & Eton Central, is literally under the Castle curtain wall by the Castle's magnificent and super large clock. Even from the town's central station is a major pull up to the interior of the Castle which was achieved by the load being pulled manually in a zig zag fashion rather like climbing a huge hill in a motor car where lots of sharp bends has the effect of straightening the climb! All ceremonial events arrive at and start from the Central Station which is fed from Paddington Station, the London start end. Back in



the 19th century when the Queen and Prince Albert went to their holiday home at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, they travelled from the Windsor Riverside Station directly to Gosport, continuing on the extension line which leads into the Royal Clarence Victualling Yard at its Royal Victoria Station. Once inside that Yard, they took passage in one of a handful of Royal Yachts (remember the now defunct title of FORY meant Flag Officer Royal YACHTS (plural)) to Osborne Bay, from where they were ferried ashore in a Royal Barge to a private landing stage, finishing off their journey in a vehicle, either mechanical or horse drawn. For the State Funeral of Queen Victoria she had previously written a script of everything that was to happen from death until burial (or in this case entombment in her husband's tomb) at Frogmore Windsor, and woe betide any person who would dare alter a single punctuation mark let alone a word.

The London route to Paddington.



In addition to that script, powerful family sources would have been at work to decide upon every ceremonial issue thereby circumventing the advice or requests coming from senior naval officers. To me, her happy years, and there were not too many of those by all accounts after Albert's very sad early death, would have been a sign post of ceremony, and they were spent at Osborne in the house that her husband designed. For Osborne read Clarence Yard the start of happy holidays, and there can be no doubt that the new King, Edward VII had said that once across the Solent, it all starts from the Gosport side of the harbour and not from the Portsmouth side, from which, her visits were nearly all dutiful. That said, and cognisant that Windsor ceremony starts with the Central rail station and definitely not at the River Side station, and that everything he had control over as the chief mourner had to relocate from the arrived at London rail station to Paddington station, he clearly used the 'change-over' to best effect to allow London to bade farewell to the Queen with appropriate pageantry. The only way he could get to inner London from Clarence Yard was to order a railway points change over on the Gosport - Windsor River Side route, onto the same track serving Portsmouth, to arrive at Waterloo station the only London station serving the Portsmouth area. Once there at Waterloo the Royal household, would provide a gun carriage and horses to transfer the coffin between trains and stations, a distance of 4.3 miles according to the AA, and that was the time slot allocated for Her Majesty's London State funeral procession, slowing to pass Buckingham Palace enroute. This is the route taken by the 'transfer stations procession', via Westminster Bridge with the letters A,B and C being respectively Waterloo, Buckingham Palace and Paddington, an event at a horse' pace of approximately one and a half hours, a good long spectacle for all who witnessed the event.

You will see three red objects bottom left of the sketch attached to Gosport station. There were others but these were the main rail stations on the Gosport route. In no particular order they represent the rail stations at Brockhurst, Stokes Bay and Lee-on-the-

Solent. Perhaps my earlier word 'hurt' when referring to Portsmouth naval hierarchy is justified, except in all those long and lonely years as a widow, I can't believe that she ever had a happy day in the premier naval port, and maybe, had she known, she wouldn't have taken it kindly if she was denied saying a fond farewell to dear old Gosport!

After Victoria's night on befuddled funeral procession, things changed dramatically and for the best. The first thing was the need for a ceremonial handbook where line and verse would be practiced over and over again, learned by heart and applied with thinking brains leaving nothing to chance. The second was not to repeat Victoria's mistakes when after Albert's death she more or less abandoned her subjects, all but her close family and close courtiers, even when preparing for death and at death's door step? In a new reign the monarch was to be in touch with the pulse of the nation even though he didn't court his subjects company favouring only those that could and did please him, he at least expanded the passing of a monarch's ceremony so that London and all who could see, could take part in the mourning processes which many had craved for Victoria. Edward VII's courtiers introduced the public laying-in-state and for a period long enough to allow all who wanted to view their deceased monarch, whereas Victoria shunned, in writing, the laying, choosing first to have the funeral, and then to rest in almost total privacy in St Georges Chapel for just two days before being removed into the Castle grounds, and into the beautiful mausoleum she had built for her beloved husband forty long years previously, a mausoleum my wife and I had the ultimate private privilege of visiting and viewing many years ago. Victoria was almost a total enigma, wearing black as she did for forty years unable to shake off her grieving and profound mourning, and yet, at death, everything had to be white and jolly (as per her written instructions) even to the point of being placed in her coffin wearing her white wedding dress and veil, accompanied by much artefact, even including the wedding ring of John Brown's mother - bizarre? Edward VII laid-in-state in Westminster Hall as all

those honoured with the title of Her or His Majesty have done since. At the end of the ceremony, there has followed a wonderful outpouring of grief juxtaposed with pride and thanksgiving for our deceased monarch, manifest in a vast parade on the streets of the capital from Westminster to Paddington railway station, with the monarch's body covered by a personal standard riding upon a gun carriage and limber supplied by Woolwich Arsenal and pulled by the Chatham Depot ratings, who see it entrained and heading for Windsor & Eton Central rail station.

On arrival in Windsor Central a second naval gun carriage is ready to take the coffin from the train and to place it on their gun carriage to complete the street procession up into the Castle confines and down the hill to the steep steps of the great west door of St Georges Chapel ready for the final journey into the Chapel for the departure service, this task performed by the senior regiment of the foot guards, viz the Grenadier Guards, eight very tall and strong soldiers. This gun comes from its home in Whale Island Portsmouth and is pulled by the Portsmouth Depot ratings.

But what of the future? Well, the Chatham Depot has long ago disbanded and I suspect also that the gun used is no longer available. Portsmouth has a gun, called correctly and fittingly the 'State Gun' but any crew mustered to pull it will be a mixture of females and males, long, tall, short, fat, long hair, big bums, flat footed and bespectacled, in short anybody they can muster on the day. That's an assumption at best for I doubt that the current dire shortage of naval personnel-power will be adequate for two parades (London and Windsor) unless we lay up a couple of ships to take their crews for the duration. I also have a sneaking belief that the RHA (Royal Horse Artillery) will benefit from our depleted force, and I witnessed their performance on the streets of London on the corner of Whitehall and Parliament Square, for the procession of bringing HM The Queen Mother to her laying-in-State ceremony in Westminster Hall in 2002, sixteen years ago.

They present themselves as an exciting spectacle but when dignity, and quiet respect are called for, it was a feature creating a great deal of noise, pooing, and frenetic animation. All good for a military spectacular but not for the pulling of a gun carriage with a senior Royal on board. However, I'll wager that it will happen, certainly in London! I love my navy and implicitly believe that the personnel are continuously top notch people, generation on generation, but I can never remember belonging to a service labouring under almost continuous ridicule from the general public because the scum-bag journalist who tells us that our navy is nothing less than a 1950's style sea cadet corps. I am however, over worried that none of us (I have three pals out there counting) have seen a fixed wing aircraft with the words "fleet air arm" blazoned along its length for approximately SEVEN long years now. However I personally saw one with F1 down its side about a month ago, but it has been discounted; so Fleet Air Arm = 0 - Formula 1 @ 150 mph with pilot missing a hairpin bend and going airborne = 1: I haven't bothered to tell the gutter press yet. As such I am seriously not looking forward to "Royal events" in the next five years or so (assuming I am still around for I am an octogenarian myself) for the very obvious reasons - I am a seriously devout Royalist, but also for the manner in which we say goodbye to monarch's. In 1979, I played a leading role in a Ceremonial Royal Funeral for Lord Mountbatten, so I know how it should be DONE and DONE properly. Here's hoping?

That's all for today folks (5th August 2018) so go well and keep reading my pages - please!