

TROOPING THE COLOUR

Ten years of austere khaki give way to old-time splendour as the King, riding this year in an open landau instead of on horseback, arrives at Horse Guards Parade for the ceremony of Trooping the Colour. Marking the official celebration of his 53rd birthday, the parade is once again a full-dress affair, with units of the five Guards Regiments lined up for the preliminary inspection. Princess Elizabeth, in the uniform of Colonel of the Grenadier Guards, is with the King as the pageantry of two centuries history returns to the life of the capital.

The gaily-uniformed foreign military attaches are absent this year as the royal escort moves to the dais where the King is to take the salute.

The oppressive atmosphere and the sultry weather has an unsettling effect on the Princess' mount, Winston. But confident horsemanship quietsens him as the massed bands of the Guards lead the parade in the slow march-past.

And so the ceremonial begins. In the manner of the daily guard-mounting routine of the 18th Century Army tradition. The Regimental Sergeant Major of the Welsh Guards receives the Colour - the King's Colour, presented a few weeks before to the Regiment at Buckingham Palace.

With sword drawn, he hands over the Colour to the ensign.

The climax to this stately guard-mounting ritual comes when, in slow time, the Colour is carried high along the lines of guardsmen, to be lowered in salute as it passes the Sovereign.

By noon, London's greatest spectacle for a decade comes to a close. The King drives back to the Palace. The near 2,000 Guardsmen form into 'divisions,' six abreast, and leave the parade ground for another year.

The Royal Family watches the cavalcade down the Mall from the Palace balcony as the Princess takes up her position near the King to receive the salute of the Palace Guard. So ends a great day for London. May this memorable occasion mark the return of enduring good health to the King.