

1 Warsash to Queen Mary 2 – Commodore Bernard Warner (1965), Cunard Line (Rtd.)

On leaving Warsash in 1965 I joined P&O as a deck cadet and remained with that company for the next 40 years! From initially sailing in dry cargo ships, I eventually sailed on my first passenger ship “Oriana” in 1969. It was this experience which convinced me that this could be the life for me, and on the formation of the P&O Passenger Division in 1972 I had no hesitation in signing up. For many this seemed ridiculous as with the advent of jet aircraft the future of passenger ships looked rather bleak at that time.

Passenger shipping turned more and more to cruising and in 1974 P&O bought Princess Cruises which was operating three small cruise ships on the west coast of America. From this time onwards I spent most of my time with Princess Cruises and was there during the transformation of the company from small 17,000 gross ton ships such as the Sun Princess to the building of much bigger ships with the launch of the 109,000 gross ton Grand Princess in the late nineties and the larger cruise ships which followed through 2001 onwards.

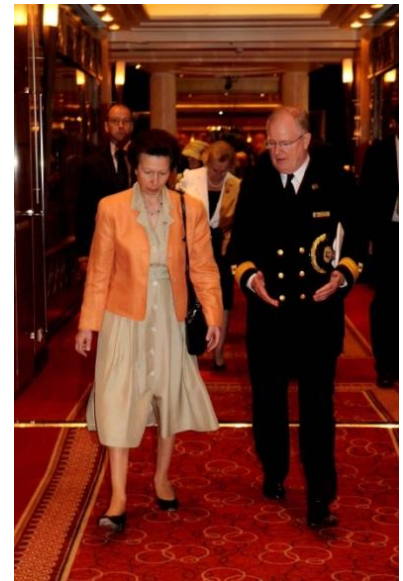
Many were surprised when the Carnival Corporation bought P&O Princess Cruises in 2003. This followed on from their purchase of Cunard Line in 1998. From one ship in 1972 they had grown rapidly to become the largest cruise ship company in the world. It was this intervention by Carnival which enabled me to transfer to Cunard Line in 2005. There was a vacancy for a Captain on Queen Mary 2 and I was asked whether I would be interested. The deliberations did not taking too long (perhaps five minutes!) and I was on my way! After all, Cunard was operating the iconic ocean liners Queen Elizabeth 2 and Queen Mary 2. I was also joining a company in expansion, with Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth on the horizon.

From the first time Samuel Cunard sailed liners on the North Atlantic he had always proclaimed safety before speed. It was therefore gratifying to see that crew members at Cunard, just as they had been at P&O Princess, were trained to look upon the safety of the ship, her passengers and crew, as a daily necessity entwined into every aspect of shipboard life. Stemming from this safety culture came the creation of a comfortable shipboard environment, from which guests could enjoy the outstanding levels of service, the finest culinary delights and a varied programme of entertainment both by day and by night.

Politicians, broadcasters, scientists, explorers, film stars and authors mix with the guests and provide outstanding lectures for the enjoyment of all. Evening shows are every bit as good as those seen in the West End or on Broadway, and once a year the National Symphony Orchestra were always popular guests.

Right: Commodore Warner with the Princess Royal aboard MS Queen Mary 2 in 2010).

Below: Queen Mary 2 A Legacy of Pride – artist © Gordon Bauwens.



In a fast moving world Cunard Line created an atmosphere away from it all, where formality and dressing up for dinner became an experience to be relished by the majority of the passengers. Other companies had steadily become more informal and Cunard certainly attracted those who wanted those bygone days of elegance recreated. Cunard does not have any class structure as would have existed in years gone by. Most guests on Queen Mary 2 enjoy fine dining in the Britannia Restaurant. The higher-grade staterooms and suites eat in either the Princess or Queens Grill where flambé cooking tableside and a little more personalized service can be expected. All the cabins (staterooms) are of a decent size but differ greatly in cost from the smallest inside cabin of 194 square feet costing about £150 a day, right up to the Grand Duplex suites of 2,294 square feet and jointly costing up to £1,200 a day. With all lower berths taken in each cabin there would be 2,620 passengers, looked after by 1,292 crew members.

Throughout the summer Queen Mary 2 crosses the Atlantic between Southampton and New York, and there is not a finer or more suitable ocean liner to fulfil this role. Not only is she spacious and elegant, but she also has the best sea keeping qualities of any other ship on which I served during my 45 years at sea.



Queen Mary 2 meets Queen Mary for the first time in Long Beach California 2007



Queen Mary 2 sailing out of New York with QE2 as she makes her final visit in 2008 before being retired

Cruise ships these days are built with flat sides and constructed to create maximum space for passengers, and hence do not have the hull design suitable to cope with the rougher seas of the North Atlantic. Queen Mary 2 is beautifully proportioned with every plate individually engineered to create an exceptionally streamlined hull to slice through large swells and rough seas with ease. Such detail does not come cheaply and the total cost of the build, prior to her naming by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth in 2003, was in the region of £540 million.

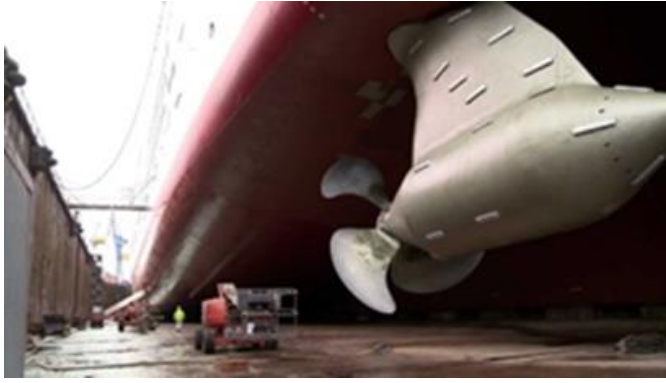
Comfort is obviously important on an ocean liner likely to meet all kinds of foul weather and the rolling motion of the ship is dampened by up to 90% by two pairs of gyroscopically controlled Rolls Royce fin stabilizers. For the size of ship these are relatively small, being just 21 feet long and 8 feet wide. Drag can reduce the speed of the ship by up to 0.5 knot, so they fold into recesses in the hull when not required.

Queen Mary2 remains the largest ocean liner in the world and, at 150,000 gross tonnes and 1,130 feet long, is over twice the size of the QE2, which retired from service in 2008. Specific to her design and purpose, Queen Mary 2 is an ocean liner and not a cruise ship. Speed was therefore essential to fulfil the requirements of a liner with a punctual Atlantic schedule. Her full speed is marginally under 30 knots so she has never been eligible for the Blue Riband. However at that speed her fuel consumption is phenomenal, and ever since her launch, the crossing time for the Atlantic has been increased in the same proportion as the cost of fuel has risen!

The power plant consists of four Wartsila medium speed diesel engines and two General Electric gas turbines. Total combined power is 117 MW or 157,168 HP. With Marine Gas Oil (MGO) being considerably more expensive than Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO), the economical speed for the ship is 23 knots running on the four diesels. Bringing in one turbine increases her speed to 26 knots and with both turbines about 29.5 knots. It is estimated that at these kinds of speeds she is doing 32 feet to the gallon and burning 500 tonnes of fuel over 24 hours! Hence the requirement for a total bunkering capacity of 10,000 tonnes.

Queen Mary 2 does not have rudders, but is steered by two Rolls Royce Mermaid azimuthing propellers. There are four large propellers at the stern of the ship (each approximately 20 feet in diameter). Each propeller is attached to the forward end of a pod, which contains the electric drive motor. The forward two props are fixed and just give ahead or astern movement, whereas the after two props are set slightly closer together and used to steer the ship while at sea. At slower speeds and on entering port the propellers are capable of being rotated through 360 degrees. This gives extreme manoeuvrability at the stern of the ship.

Another interesting fact about the propellers is that they pull the liner through the water and do not push as on most conventional ships. The entire pod with the prop attached weighs about 260 tonnes or the equivalent of a Boeing 747!



Port side Rolls Royce ahead/ astern propeller



Rolls Royce Mermaid azimuth pods

At the bow there are three thrusters mounted in athwartship tunnels running beneath the waterline. These draw water in from one side of the ship and throw it out the other, thus creating the thrust to move the bow in synchronization with the stern. The later ships, Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth, have not been designed to operate at the same kind of speeds as Queen Mary 2 and consequently they do not require the additional two fixed propellers. They do however have two “azipods”.

Day in and day out the passengers and crew (nearly 4000 of them) take baths and showers (at least we hope they do!) without giving any thought as to where it all comes from! The liner has three Alfa Lavel flash evaporators which make up to 1,900 tonnes of freshwater a day and this just about keeps up with the daily consumption. Long gone are the days when on Cunarders such as Mauretania, or even Queen Elizabeth and Queen Mary when only saltwater baths were available!

Now that I am retired, the thing I probably miss most is the ship handling, and in most circumstances, being able to take Queen Mary 2 in and out of port without the use of tugs. Using one hand on the controls, she can hold up against a beam wind of nearly 30 knots, which is a remarkable achievement considering the ship’s side is about 3.5 acres and acts like a gigantic sail!

Although backwards and forwards across the Atlantic during summer may sound monotonous to some, nothing could be further from the truth. The passage route is always different in order to take advantage of the fairest weather, avoid or take advantage of the Gulf Stream, and of course avoid the ice, prevalent over the Grand Banks of Newfoundland from February through to late June. The most oft asked question other than “If you’re here who’s driving?” was “Will we pass over the wreck of the Titanic?” We were normally within just a few miles of that fateful position.

Summer Atlantic crossings are interspersed with voyages up to Norway and south to the Mediterranean. During autumn she sails out of New York up the east coast of the United States as far as Quebec and most winters she can be found in the Caribbean. Once a year she undergoes a World Voyage and even today creates a great deal of interest at all the ports she visits.

I was appointed Commodore of Cunard Line in 2007. Although making visits to the other ships in the Fleet, I chose to remain in Command of Queen Mary 2, which in my view remains the finest ship afloat. Not just because of her size and grandeur, but more particularly for the finest ship’s company, who from top to bottom work exceptionally hard to provide outstanding levels of service to many wonderful passengers from both sides of the Atlantic. The crew is the lifeblood of the ship!

2 My Cunard Days – Captain Mike England (1960)

Mention Cunard to most people and they think of the iconic transatlantic Liners. When I joined Cunard in 1960 they had eleven passenger ships. The two Queens and the Mauritania were on a weekly service to New York from Southampton, the Britannic, Media and Parthia to New York from Liverpool, the Saxonia, Ivernia, Sylvania and Carinthia to Montreal and Quebec from Liverpool. The remaining vessel, the Caronia, was built to world cruise. She was not, as they are today, painted white but two tone green with the hull darker than the superstructure. The idea behind this was that green was kinder to the eyes in the tropics.

The Liverpool crews called this colour 'WC green'. In 1960 all deck officers on the passenger ships had a Masters ticket, so all cadets joining the company served on Cunard's cargo ships. Seven of the cargo ships, namely Arabia, Asia, Assyria, Andria, Alsatia, Alaunia and Andania were on the North Atlantic trade mainly between London and Liverpool to the east coast of the USA and Canada. The main ports of call in the USA were Boston, New York, Baltimore and Philadelphia, whilst the Canadian ports were Montreal and Quebec in the summer and Halifax and St John in the winter. During my time in Cunard the routes extended to ports in the Gulf of Mexico calling at Houston, Galveston, New Orleans, Pensacola and Tampa.



The remaining four ships, namely Pavia, Phrygia, Lycia and Brescia, which were half the size of the Atlantic ships, were trading from Liverpool to ports in the Mediterranean and Black Sea. These ships were originally destined to trade between Liverpool and ports in the Great Lakes but although the odd voyage to the Great Lakes was undertaken it did not become a regular route.

My first ship after leaving the School of Navigation was the Arabia which I joined in Liverpool's Gladstone Dock on May 2nd 1960. Nothing I learned at Warsash could have prepared me for the North Atlantic! The weather was terrible even in the summer months. The Arabia was running between Liverpool and Montreal so we were always on a northerly great circle and I was seasick for the first three voyages. On arriving back at Liverpool after the third miserable crossing I vowed to do one more and if I was sick again I would never set foot on another ship. Fortunately on the fourth voyage I found my sea legs and was never afflicted again.

Whilst at sea I was on the 4-8 watch with the mate and then after breakfast I would work on deck with the Bosun until midday. It was good training, the Mate's philosophy was never tell a man what to do if you could not do it yourself.

During my apprenticeship I served on Arabia (right), Asia, Assyria, Pavia and Brescia. The Pavia and Brescia made a welcome break from the North Atlantic as they were on the Mediterranean routes calling mainly at Italian, Greek and Turkish ports. Life was much slower, many ports were 'anchors-down, stern-to. In Greece we loaded currants and sultanas.



The cargo was brought to the quayside on carts pulled by horses, loaded into barges and when the barge was full it was pulled out to the ship's side where it was loaded aboard. It took forever. This was not a problem for us as usually close by was a quiet beach where we could top up our sun tan. Talking about sun tans reminds me that on one voyage we were on the boat deck sunbathing and one of the crew members, who happened to be black, spotted us and remarked that he couldn't understand why we were trying to get black when he and millions like him were trying to get white.

On obtaining my Second Mates certificate in July 63 I was appointed to the Pavia. She had been chartered to Zim Israel Nav. Co. Ltd, and was in Leghorn Italy. Cunard flew me and the rest of the crew out to join the ship with the promise that we would be relieved after 6 months. The ship was chartered to trade between Eilat in southern Israel and the east coast of Africa, South Africa and Indian Ocean Islands including Madagascar and Mauritius. Departing from Leghorn we headed to transit the Suez Canal which I found fascinating as it was all new to me. Once through the canal we were ordered to Djibouti for bunkers then to Quelemaine, Durban and Cape Town returning to Eilat via Mombasa. The ship was never designed for these waters, the main engine was a Doxford Diesel but all the winches and windless were steam which meant that the engine room was unbearably hot. None of the accommodation was air conditioned so sleeping became a problem especially to start with as most of us had been toughened up on the North Atlantic.

The voyage to Cape Town and back to Eilat was mostly uneventful. On arrival in Eilat we had to anchor to await a berth, the wind was blowing off the desert and I couldn't believe how hot and dry it was, so hot and dry that perspiration did not stand a chance. The Captain decided that whilst at anchor we would lower the lifeboats to make sure the gravity davits still worked. The starboard boat was lowered first and on touching the water it just kept going until completely submerged. The boats were timber clinker built and the hot dry weather had caused the timbers to dry out and shrink so were no longer water tight. We left the boats in the water to fix the problem.

In the seven months I was on this ship I have many happy memories, particularly a) getting a team together from the crew to play soccer against what we thought were a bunch of local lads only to find that we were playing against the Eilat professionals - we got slaughtered 23-0, b) the Jewish port medical officer always arrived on the ship at breakfast time so that he could savour a bacon buttie, c) a visit to a kibbutz where I drank dark beer and everybody laughed at me because only pregnant ladies drank dark beer, d) swimming in the sea on Christmas day with the Indian Ocean so calm it looked like a mirror, e) the stewardess on the flight from Eilat to Tel Aviv who

asked would I like some tea and when I replied yes placed a cup of hot water in front of me then dunked an already used teabag into it a couple of times to add colour.



mv Pavia chartered to Zim Israel Line

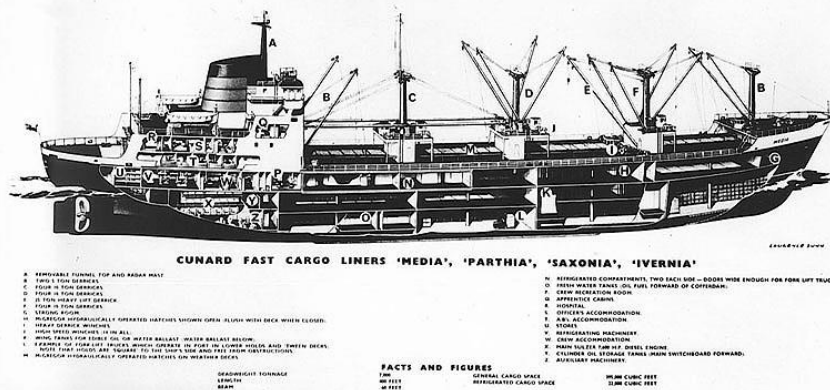


mv Brescia at Venice

My next ship was the Brescia, originally built as the Hickory Isle before becoming one of Cunard's Mediterranean fleet. The Brescia did ten knots flat out with the wind behind and if we encountered any weather with a head wind she would stop. We once spent three days off Cape Finisterre until the weather changed. Despite this she was a happy ship and I enjoyed my time on her. One voyage when we were ordered to proceed to Kulluk in Turkey to load 700 tons of emery stone. The captain instructed me to lay off a course but I could not find a port called Kulluk but I did find a Gulluk so the captain said " that's close enough lets go there."

On arrival we spotted a mound of stone so figured we were in the right place. We anchored stern-to and on the shore women loaded the emery stone into baskets which they then carried on their heads to the water's edge and emptied into a barge. The barge was pulled out to the ship and the men loaded the stone into the ship. I asked the agent how he knew when we had loaded 700 tons and he shrugged and said "you tell me"! The Mate had to watch the draft carefully and calculate when we had the right load.

From 1963 and 1970 I served on many of the company's cargo vessels. In 1966 Cunard and Brocklebank amalgamated to be known as Cunard Brocklebank and I served on three of the Brocklebank ships, the Masirah, the Maskeliya and the Mangla. Between 1963 and 1966 Cunard built six new cargo ships of the same design to replace the ageing Atlantic ships named Parthia, Media, Ivernia, Scythia, Samaria and Scotia. All of these ships were Sulzer powered diesels and were affectionately called 'The Mickey Mouse Boats'.



Cutaway view of Cunard's 'Mickey Mouse Boats'

In December 1966 I joined the Scotia in Cammel Lairds where she had been built. The Scotia was the last of the 'Mickey Mouse Boats' and she was a little different from the previous five in that she had an ice strengthened bow and a bridge controlled engine. The design of the ship was to provide an all year round service to Montreal and Quebec which meant that during the winter months we encountered a lot of ice. After trials our first voyage from Liverpool to Montreal was a success but navigating through the ice in The Gulf of St Lawrence was a new experience. You had to continually look for leads in the ice and constantly monitor the load on the main engine winding it back if it exceeded a certain amount. If the ice was very thick we would stop, go astern and then ahead to break a way through, hence the bridge controlled engine. First time in the ice.

On 20th December 1967 we embarked on another voyage to Montreal arriving just after Christmas. Normally the ice would be flowing down the St Lawrence towards the Gulf of St Lawrence thence out to sea but on this occasion the flow stopped because of a blockage at Sorrel and Three Rivers. The water level in Montreal started to rise and if the block was not cleared large parts of the city would be flooded so all shipping movement were stopped to allow the ice breakers to clear the block. We, along with many other ships, were held in Montreal for almost eight weeks. During this time we put extra moorings ashore including hanging off the starboard anchor and putting the cable ashore. Whenever the ship was moored or anchored in ice we inserted the rudder pin to safeguard the steering engine.

Towards the end of February when the blockage was cleared, up on the bridge I suddenly noticed that the ice around us had started to move. I realised very quickly that if a large flow of ice hit us we would be swept away. I called the Captain and told the engine room that we needed main engines as soon as possible. By the time the Captain arrived on the bridge we were on the move as the moorings parted and the bollard around which our anchor cable was fixed was torn out of the quay. The accommodation ladder slid along the quay jammed against a bollard and was bent beyond repair, but sliding alongside the ship astern of us our damaged ladder acted as a sort of fender. Within 8 minutes we had main engines but no steerage as the rudder pin had frozen in and it took 20 minutes with a blow torch to free it. All this time we are locked in a huge lump of ice drifting down the river. The Captain was brilliant, he remained calm and when he had steerage and engines he freed us from the ice and got us safely back to the berth. Many ships had suffered the same fate as ourselves such was the force of the flow. We were told later that the water level had dropped 15 feet in 15 minutes.

In 1969 Cunard offered me a job working ashore in the container business with the newly formed Atlantic Container Line of which Cunard was a partner and would be supplying two vessels. Initially I refused as I loved being at sea but was told that I had two choices, either accept the job or leave as all the current cargo vessels were going to be sold. (Right: mv Scotia in the St Lawrence).



At this time I was Chief Officer having served on the Mangla in that position. My last voyage at sea was as Chief Officer of the Parthia to New York and as I was now married I took Jenny with me.

To conclude, Cunard were good to me as they had been to my father and my grandfather. Despite spending nearly all my seagoing career on the cargo ships I did sail as junior third on the Grand Old Lady Queen Elizabeth and the Franconia (ex-Ivernia) but that's another story.



Near right: Third, Second and Chief Officer Mike England aboard mv Parthia. **Far right:** C/O Mike England with 'Captain' Jenny England.