

A ROYAL QUEEN OF THE SEAS

BY KEITH INGRAM

When Auckland welcomed the Cunard Line's new luxury liner *Queen Elizabeth* during her maiden call to Auckland on February 17, her modern construction still followed one ancient maritime tradition.

For old sea dogs who remember such things, I'm not talking about the golden rivet, either. (See sidebar).

To celebrate the importance of the *Queen Elizabeth* before her launch, a traditional "coin ceremony" was carried out with not one but three coins welded together onto the ship. They were a half crown dated 1938 to mark the year of the launch of the first *Queen Elizabeth*, a 1967 sovereign to mark the launch of the *Queen Elizabeth 2*, and a 2010 sovereign, the year of the new *Queen Elizabeth*.

The elegant liner carried about 2000 guests and almost 1000 crew when she entered the Waitemata Harbour about half way through her inaugural 103-night voyage around the world. Her visit was expected to generate up to \$1 million for the Auckland economy.

Under the command of Captain Julian Burgess, she berthed alongside Princes Wharf at about 0700 as dawn was breaking, and left after dark that evening. Stretching 294 metres in length, and wearing Cunard's classic red and black livery, the four-month old, 90,900-tonne ship's presence made a significant statement.

She was built in Monfalcone by Italy's state-owned shipbuilder Fincantieri for some €500 million (NZ\$920 million) and launched by HRH Queen Elizabeth II last October 10. Fincantieri also built Cunard's slightly smaller *Queen Victoria*, which carries up to 2014 passengers and entered service in November 2007, and the *Queen Mary 2*. Cunard retired its longtime flagship, the famed *Queen Elizabeth 2*, two years ago. This means Cunard now has one of the most modern fleets in

the cruise industry, with three liners less than six years old.

As with the *Queen Victoria*, the *QE*, as she is affectionately known, is a Vista class ship but carries slightly more passengers in 1046 suites, 71 percent of which have balconies. She has a space ratio of gross tonnage per guest of 43 tonnes.

"This ship has been built to a record schedule," said the boss of the shipyard, Giaconi. He said her hull was built in just six months.

While the *Queen Victoria* is powered by four Wärtsilä 16-cylinder engines and two 12-cylinder engines, the *QE* is powered by six Mak M43C diesel engines driving two ABB pods. For maneuverability she has three Fincantieri Riva Trigoso thrusters plus a pair of Fincantieri Riva Trigoso stabilisers to ensure passenger comfort at sea.

The *QE* was built with energy savings in mind. "We have applied new technologies in collaboration with the owner to reduce fuel consumption and emissions," said Giaconi.

"As part of the design process, in the preliminary stage Fincantieri



Captain
Julian Burgess





The keel laying or in this case the first section

RIGHT:
From here the ship quickly grows as sections constructed ashore are added



did tests in a wind tunnel tank to reduce the ship's drag and resistance at steaming speeds.

This led the shipbuilder to optimise her longitudinal situation and incorporate several small features that allow her to save a significant amount of energy and reduce her running costs, he said.

"Construction time and the whole outfitting process was tight, requiring all trades to work together," says Giaconi.

Outfitting the ship was completed within a few months, and her first sea trials took place in the middle of August, less than two months before she was handed over to Cunard, so the team at Fincantieri had one month to put the final touches to the project.

This really says a lot about the commercial power of these European shipyards to deliver a turnkey operation on time and on budget. This is amazing when you think about it, especially considering that since 1990 Fincantieri has delivered 51 cruise ships.

Of these, 47 were built for the six main brands of the Carnival Group. A further 12 ships will be built in Fincantieri's shipyards for delivery during 2012. Scary stuff. Remember, we are talking ships here, not boats.

Professional Skipper was invited on board for an exclusive preview of the ship during her Auckland stopover. We met Cunard's president and managing director, Peter Shanks, who ►



The propulsion pods under construction

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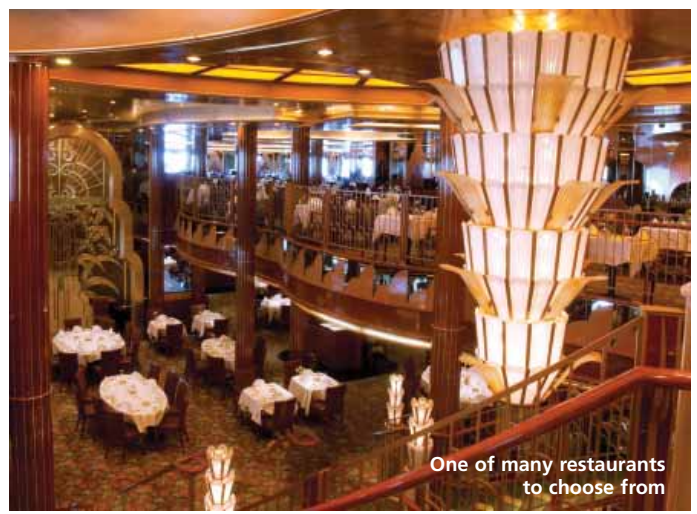
The main sundeck and swimming pool



A state room with a view and private balcony



Fine dining at its best



One of many restaurants to choose from

said the company was thrilled Auckland accepted the opportunity to welcome the *Queen Elizabeth* on her first world voyage.

“New Zealand has long been a favourite destination for our Cunard world voyage guests, who are keen to appreciate the country’s spectacular landscape and vibrant culture,” Shanks said.

This ship pays homage to the original *Queen Elizabeth* and features many old and famous Cunard hallmarks, along with some

IN THE EARLY days of iron ships, the last rivet was often made of polished brass. It was usually applied in the engine-room. In naval folklore, every ship contains a single, commemorative golden rivet. Of course the rivet doesn’t exist.

The myth is a practical joke played by “old salts” on gullible junior ratings, who will be told about the “golden rivet” and encouraged to look for it, without success of course. A senior sailor may also point to somewhere in the deck plating, then give the rating a kick in the backside when he bends over to search for it.

The legend has a royal twist. As told by the commanding officer of *HMY Britannia*, just before she was commissioned, a young Princess Elizabeth inspected her and asked to see the famous golden rivet she had heard about.

A minor panic ensued, but the ingenuity of the Royal Navy came to the fore. Some gold leaf was found, quickly hammered over the head of a rivet in the engine room and duly shown to the little princess.

Word has it they replaced the rivet with one of polished brass and have maintained the “golden rivet” ever since.

that are new. Her name alone retains strong links with the Royal Family, and it is interesting to note that on the day of her official launch and christening, Her Majesty was the only person present who had been at the launching and christenings of all three Cunard ships named the *Queen Elizabeth*.

When I asked why the new ship is not the *Queen Elizabeth 3* or *III*, Shanks responded with a flippant, “I could say ... but!” The truth, he told me, is that all three ships were supposed to be named the *Queen Elizabeth*. “Unfortunately, Her Majesty was not fully briefed and gave a slight slip in naming the second ship when she said: ‘I name this ship Queen Elizabeth the second.’”

This immediately sent Cunard into a mild panic, with the resulting addition of the figure 2 after her name and all the stationary and thousands of other items, and not the traditional II with respect to the current Queen’s title. The new ship has been named in keeping with Cunard’s request, with the Queen’s blessing.

Her maiden round-the-world voyage saw her sail from the port of Southampton to New York, Fort Lauderdale, through the Panama Canal to Costa Rica and Mexico, before visiting San Francisco and sailing south to New Zealand and Australia. She then headed north to Asia and through the Suez Canal to the Mediterranean before returning to Southampton. Meanwhile, the magnificent *Queen Mary 2* called in to both Lyttelton and Auckland as part of her 2011 world cruise. Between them, the two liners visit 60 ports across 33 countries on their world cruises.

The two ships each hosted prestigious Cunard World Cruise dinners during their Auckland stopovers for passengers on the world voyages at the SkyCity Auckland Convention Centre. ▶

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Further information

Refer to the latest version of the publication Cook Strait Submarine Cable Protection Zone which is downloadable from the Transpower website www.transpower.co.nz

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not cables



Looking down the main atrium



Anyone for bowls?



The main theatre is as good as any in the world

Around 500 guests from the *Queen Elizabeth* and 600 from the *Queen Mary 2* enjoyed a sumptuous dinner featuring the best New Zealand cuisine. The dinners are a highlight of their annual world voyages and invitations are only extended to guests booked on the full global circumnavigation.

Auckland has hosted World Cruise Dinners in the past, as have Sydney, Melbourne and Cape Town. However, it is rare for one city to host the dinners for two Cunard ships in one year.

“Auckland is a very popular port of call on our world voyages and makes the ideal location for these memorable dinners,” Shanks said.

The *Queen Elizabeth* is some ship. She has the traditional stylish British décor of timber and stained glass. Her most spacious and luxurious accommodation is the six master and grand suites, named in honour of Cunard Commodores who have received knighthoods. Light timber, oak and mahogany with luxurious upholstery adds elegance to these fine retreats.

Guests can summon champagne to their own private veranda, dine in their suite with dishes chosen from the Queens Grill menu, and enjoy the services of a butler. A concierge will arrange any shore excursion they desire. This is pampering at its best.

But let’s not be shy. We reviewed other suites from the Queens and Princess options to the cheaper Britannia, all with balconies, and finally the ocean view and inside staterooms, which still provide a welcome enclave of comfort and good taste.

These cabins are ideal for party animals or those who spend most of their time enjoying the entertainment and hospitality of cruising and just want a place to crash in style. When you need time out to recharge batteries you can wrap yourself in the soft bathrobe, ease into your slippers and settle down to a film on your television or a snooze.

To assist in all this relaxation, the ship’s many features include more than 10 restaurants and cafés, two outdoor swimming pools, a games deck including paddle tennis, croquet and bowls, and a


two-storey library with a leaded glass ceiling and a globe from the original *Queen Elizabeth*.

From dining to floorshows, cabaret and theatre, the options are of world standard, with so much on offer, including 12 bars, clubs and the casino. We can imagine what it may be like to struggle with so many choices of food and entertainment.

To cater for this demand, the ship’s stores include a virtual winery to fill its cellars to supply the 327 bottles of champagne, 297 bottles of red wine and 327 bottles of white wine consumed each day, not to mention several huge beer kegs and a truck load of mixes.

In the galley, they budget for 4188 eggs and 287 litres of fruit juice per day. Almost 5870kg of smoked salmon, 15,817kg of breakfast cereal and about 55 tonnes of scrambled eggs are eaten each year. The amounts of meat, seafood, fruit and vegetables are difficult to comprehend. They even use 141,600 toothpicks each year.

Catering for the ship is big business for any provedore, so when she takes on stores in New Zealand it is easy to see how she becomes a significant contributor to the local economy.

The *Queen Elizabeth* is certainly appealing and she has a lot to live up to. Such was the anticipation of her entry into service that tickets for her maiden voyage sold out in 29 minutes. She is a magnificent ship, and can rightly claim her place to be a Queen of the Seas. 

SPECIFICATIONS

Country of registry	Great Britain
Length	294m
Width	32.3m
Draft	8m
Speed	23.7 knots
Gross tonnage	90,900
Guests	2068
Crew	996