



BUSY TIME FOR DOCK

VTF's busy summer ship repair schedule continued with the ro-ro passenger ferries *Suilven* and *Monte Stello* dry-docking through March.

The *MV Suilven* arrived from Fiji in March to dry-dock for withdrawal and survey of both tailshafts and preparation and painting of her underwater hull, as well as her bow and stern cargo ramps. The tailshaft survey included repairs to propeller blades and replacing the stern tube and propeller blade seals.

The rudders were removed in way of the tailshaft survey, leading to removal of the starboard rudder stock, which required machining and repair. The *Suilven* was in dry-dock for about 12 days while these and various pipe work and general repairs were completed.

The recently purchased *MV Monte Stello* arrived from Spain on March 10 to undergo a 21-day refit period, including 12 days in dry-dock, prior to joining Strait Shipping's Bluebridge Cook Strait ferry service.

The 11,630grt, 126.5m vessel underwent a class renewal survey to bring her under Lloyds Classification. The *Monte Stello* also underwent general machinery repairs, with the main item being an overhaul of the two Pielstick 12 PC2.5 main engines, as well as beginning an upgrade programme to convert her existing overnight cabins to day cabins and lounge areas more suited to the Cook Strait operation.

Her approximate 6000sq m of underwater hull and topsides



The *Suilven*

were waterblasted clean, then painted in Strait Shipping's blue and white livery.

VT Fitzroy said it was very pleased to be selected for the *Monte Stello* refit, in preference to the Spanish yards where the vessel was previously based.

MAIDEN VOYAGE SOLD OUT

Cunard's third big cruise liner, the 90,000gt *Queen Victoria*, won't be delivered until next year, but her maiden voyage, a 10-day cruise to northern European ports, is already sold out, reports our US correspondent, Hugh Ware.

Unlike the *Queen Mary 2*, the *Queen Victoria* will have only one funnel. (That's a trick statement - the *QM2* has a regular funnel plus two vertical "stovepipes" back aft.)

Royal Caribbean has ordered a 5400-passenger ship, but its rival, Carnival, says it will wait to judge public acceptance of ships carrying more than about 4000 guests.

Meanwhile, Celebrity has ordered two more of its giant 118,000gt Solstice-class cruise ships, each of which carries only 2850 passengers.

PROPELLER PROBLEMS PLAGUE LINER

Cunard, the owners of the ocean liner *Queen Mary 2*, have cancelled two upcoming cruises to allow time for her to enter dry-dock in May and November for repairs to rectify a propeller-pod problem that has plagued the ship recently.

A scheduled Mediterranean cruise in May has been replaced by



The *Monte Stello*

a shorter voyage to the Norwegian fjords, while a delayed line voyage from her home port of Southampton to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in November replaces a planned Caribbean cruise.

Passengers aboard the ship during a South American cruise in January threatened to "mutiny" after some scheduled stopovers were cancelled due to the propulsion problems, when the ship operating at reduced speed. Cunard refunded the passengers after many of them threatened a "sit-in" once the ship docked in Rio de Janeiro. Sources report many were complaining, among other things, of having been at sea for 10 days without going ashore.

The 151,400grt *QM2*, launched in 2004, is currently the world's largest cruise liner. She is scheduled to visit the South Pacific, including Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, in February 2007 during her inaugural round-the-world cruise.

GODDESS SAILS INTO AUCKLAND

P&O's luxurious British superliner, the *Aurora*, arrived in Auckland with 2000 seafarers on board on February 11 as part of a grand journey around the world in 80 days. The circumnavigation took her passengers to 27 ports in 20 countries on every continent except Antarctica. Her destinations include the Caribbean, Hawaii, Hong Kong, India, Egypt and Italy, as well as transits of the Panama and Suez Canals.

Aurora is named after the Roman goddess of the dawn, and boasts 406 private balconies, a netted cricket pitch, and enough teacups for the London Ritz to serve tea for a month without needing to wash up. She boasts a four-storey waterfall in the atrium, three pools, 3600 pieces of artwork, a gym, a West End-style theatre, five restaurants and cafés, 12 bars, five lounges and four dance floors.

The *Aurora* also offers a butler for guests in the top suites, including two-storey penthouses with their own grand piano and spiral staircase.

Launched in 2000 at a cost of NZ\$825 million, the *Aurora* generates enough power to supply electricity to Palmerston North and is 10m taller than Niagara Falls, placing her on an expanding list of modern superliners that are too big to fit under the Auckland Harbour Bridge.

Passengers paid between NZ\$22,582 and \$97,602 each for the entire voyage, including all meals and entertainment.



Shorter sectors were also available from around \$262 per person a day.

Her visit was expected to boost the Auckland economy by more than \$1 million, thanks to spending ashore by passengers and crew,

as well as the cost of local port services and stores.

P&O Cruises' New Zealand Manager, Shannon Currie, says the *Aurora's* visit was part of the worldwide boom in cruising that will see a record 11.7 million people around the world take a holiday at sea this year.

"Beautiful ships like the *Aurora* provide a romantic, hassle-free and value-for-money way to see the world. More and more people are seeing cruising as an ideal way to travel," he says.

Cabins are now available for the 2007 world cruises, with fares available from \$13,844 per person for a 45-night sector from Southampton to Auckland. Shorter sectors from Auckland will also be available from March 2006.

See www.pocruises.co.nz.



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