

THE NEW QM2

A FEW WORDS WITH COMMODORE RONALD WARWICK ABOUT HIS NEW COMMAND

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On 22 April 2004, QUEEN MARY 2 (“QM2”), the largest passenger ship in the world, paid her initial call to our harbor. After three days of stopping traffic on the Westside, QM2 sailed with her predecessor, QUEEN ELIZABETH 2 (“QE2”), past saluting fireboats and a fireworks display. In view of the fact that QM2 is ultimately American-owned (her owner Cunard Line Ltd. is a unit of Carnival Corporation) and that she will be serving New York on a regular basis, the arrival of this ship is an important event in New York merchant marine history. Accordingly, *The Log* sat down with the master of QM2, Commodore Ronald Warwick, to discuss this historic ship from a sailor’s perspective.

QM2 is the first ocean liner built in over 40 years. An ocean liner differs from a cruise ship in that the former is designed primarily for blue/gray water voyages from A to B whereas the latter is designed for leisurely round trips in calm waters. Accordingly, cruise ships also tend to have much blunter bows than ocean liners and considerably more speed. QM2 was built in France at the same shipyard that built the NORMANDIE and the FRANCE at a cost of over \$800 million.

QM2 is 1,132 feet long and has a beam of 135 feet. As such, QM2 is

approximately the same dimensions as the USS ENTERPRISE (CVN 65). Towering 204 feet above the waterline, “wind has a great effect.” Yet, unlike the original QUEEN MARY (retired in 1967), the QM2 has very little roll in normal seas. Commodore Warwick also said that the ship did well in the force 10 conditions that she encountered on her first transatlantic crossing, attributing the ship’s good seakeeping ability primarily to the design of the hull, which is longer and wider than other passenger ships.



QM2 (Photo: R.H. Wagner)

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When QE2 was constructed in the 1960s, the builders employed technology that was in advance of its time, which has kept that ship from becoming obsolete. Commodore Warwick, who commanded QE2 and who authored the definitive book on that ship, explained that QM2 also uses innovative technology but “not quite in the same way.” While QM2 was not the first ship to employ any particular technology, the designers of QM2 incorporated the latest technology in their plans. Moreover, because ships can be built much more quickly today than in the 1960s, the technologies incorporated in the designs remained cutting edge when the ship went into service.



Commodore Warwick (Photo: R.H. Wagner).

To illustrate how the advance of technology affected construction,

consider how the designers approached the problem of making the hull strong enough to handle the rigors of the North Atlantic. The designers of QE2 knowing that the hull needed to be strong simply made the steel of the hull as thick as a warship. Because of modern testing and computer profiles, the designers of QM2 were able to determine much more precisely how much steel was needed. Consequently, the steel of QM2’s hull “is not quite as thick but is just as strong.”

QM2 is powered through the water, not by conventional propellers connected by long shafts to the engines, but by four pods suspended beneath the hull, which produce 157,000 horsepower and allow the ship a maximum speed of approximately 30 knots. The propellers on the pods face forward and pull the ship through the water like an airplane’s propellers pull a plane through the sky. “This is a much more efficient arrangement.” The blades are turning in undisturbed water which allows “the full effect of the blades” to go toward propulsion.

The pod arrangement also dramatically increases the ship’s maneuverability. The rear two pods can be turned through 360 degrees, which when combined with the ship’s three bow thrusters, allow the ship “to turn very comfortably within her own length.” Accordingly the QM2 does not have to use tugs, although in harbors like New York, tugs are hired to standby “as a question of prudence.” Not bad for a ship with no rudder.

Looking like modern art, QM2 carries spare blades on her foredeck. The Commodore pointed out that each blade has a small hole in it to allow for lifting by cranes. This is to facilitate

using divers working with sea canes to replace damaged blades rather than taking the ship into a shipyard for such repairs.

Each of the earlier Cunard queen-class ocean liners has served as a troopship. As a British-flag ship, QM2 is also subject to being “taken up from trade.” Commodore Warwick commented that “it would be foolhardy to say that it would never happen.” However, “I don’t foresee a situation where such a thing would occur again.” The reason the QE2 was called into service in 1982 was that there was no way to transport British forces to the Falkland Islands combat zone by air. In subsequent conflicts, the primary means of transporting troops has been by plane, not troopship.

Inside QM2 resembles a five-star post-modern hotel with ten restaurants, 14 bars, five swimming pools, a Canyon Ranch spa, the first planetarium at sea, and Internet connections throughout. She can accommodate 2,620 passengers and has a crew of 1,253.