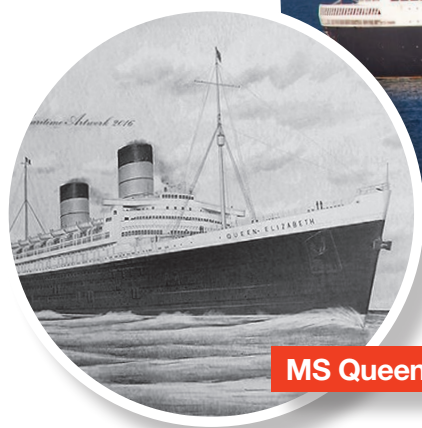




Queen Elizabeth 2



MS Queen Elizabeth

Blue Peter Man And Boy

Aged five, Stephen got home from school as he did every Monday and Thursday in 1965 and put on his favourite television programme, Blue Peter.

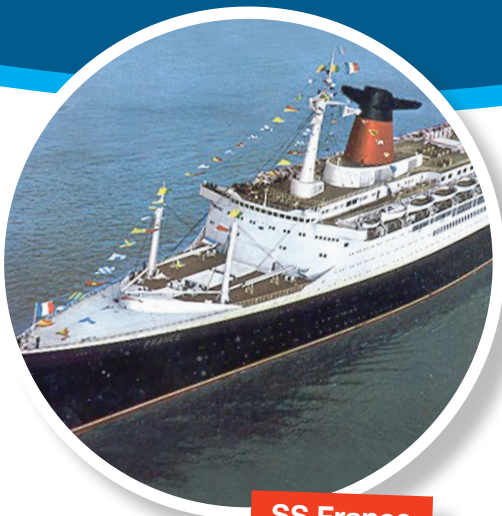
He just loved finding out about places he had never heard of and people who did amazing things. Stuff to do with the sea was the best and when he turned eight he would learn to sail. It was on his birthday list anyway.

Stephen switched on the tv. The lack of colour and the fuzzy picture didn't bother him. At first he couldn't believe his eyes. Then he couldn't believe his luck. He had found what he was looking for, what he was going to do when he grew up. The presenter, Valerie Singleton, was actually on board the Queen Elizabeth, the huge passenger liner that took people on holiday to America and all over the world. It was a miracle. How could a ship carry so many people and have so many things to do on board, be so beautiful

“

How could a ship carry so many people and have so many things to do on board, be so beautiful and stay afloat? He would find out more.”

“ By the time he was 12 years old in 1972, Stephen hadn’t changed his mind. He would design and build cruise ships when he was old enough and nothing would stop him.



SS France

and stay afloat? He would find out more. Better still, he would design and build an even bigger and better liner than the Queen Elizabeth. He knew about the Titanic of course, but what about the great liners that followed her. Which was the biggest? The fastest? The most grand? Stephen wanted to know. His mind was made up and for a long time he didn’t stop thinking about what he had seen.

A day to remember

Nearly four years passed until a family holiday to Bournemouth in June 1969 confirmed his resolve. Another term was ending and, apart from the summer holidays, all the excitement at home and at school seemed to be about the Americans getting ready to send men to the moon on the Apollo rocket. Stephen was more focused on Bournemouth and the day trip to Southampton Docks that his dad had told him about.

The big day finally arrived. Before Stephen knew it, his mouth wide open, he was looking straight at the magnificent Queen Elizabeth II. Launched only one month previously, he was told. Bigger and even more beautiful than he could have imagined, and certainly grander than her predecessor he had seen on Blue Peter. As part of the day, Stephen and his family were allowed to board her and look around. Another miracle, Stephen thought. How could this possibly be happening to him.



SS United States

It was about to get even better. Stephen stood on the top deck and took in the panorama of Southampton docks and the sea beyond. Suddenly, there, right in front of him, as unbelievable as standing on the deck of the QE2, the SS United States was slowly cruising into Southampton Harbour right in front of him. The fastest passenger ship of all time, no less.

When he got home Stephen wasted no time. He wrote to the big companies that owned the great liners. Could they send him pictures, information, anything please. His persistence paid off. In one of the responses Stephen discovered that the SS France – which he knew was the longest passenger ship built at over 1,000 feet – would soon be taken out of service. To this day he doesn’t know how he did it or why his father gave in so easily, but Stephen was granted his wish. His dad took him to Le Havre in France so that he could sail back across the Channel on the SS France.

End of an era

By the time he was 12 years old in 1972, Stephen hadn’t changed his mind. He would design and build cruise ships when he was old enough and nothing would stop him. Nothing that he could think of, anyway. What did stop him dead in his tracks came from the most unexpected source: his favourite reading of the year, the Blue Peter Christmas Annual. Slowly, tearfully, unable to take in the news, he read: *“It is a sad moment for everybody who loves great ships /cause the Queen Eliza/th is the last of a great age, a superliner, and nothing like her will ever / built again.”*

Continued >

MS Queen Elizabeth



“Your ideas on building another big liner one day are just great, but please don’t be upset if your ship is never built. Here’s a Blue Peter badge”

Christmas cancelled!

For Stephen, Christmas was cancelled. His dream shattered, he first wondered what was the point of going back to school. For that matter what was the point of 1973? Dejection quickly turned to anger. How could they possibly know or say that, he reflected. Thousands of people had loved the luxury of travelling on the great liners for decades. Why wouldn’t thousands more want them in future?

There was only one thing to do. Stephen would write a letter of complaint to Blue Peter. Tell them why, much as he still loved the programme and the Annual, they were just plain wrong. Tell them that, if no one else would, he certainly had no doubt about designing great liners in future.

Thank you for your letter, Stephen. The presenters and I loved reading it, so the editor wrote. Your ideas on building another big liner one day are just great, but please don’t be upset if your ship is never built. Here’s a Blue Peter badge.

A double blow, the message clear:

“1. Stephen, forget about big liners’ and 2. We think your letter merits a blue badge, not a gold or a silver one.” Maybe it was just a dream, he wondered. A childhood enthusiasm that would pass and fade away as he got older. The years of secondary school passed but still Stephen’s gut instinct and passion did not change.

When the moment came, he plucked up the courage to tell his teachers and career adviser what he really wanted to do. Don’t be daft, Stephen, was the most common response. There are no jobs in engineering or in naval architecture. Don’t even think about it. You are good at Maths and Science, so why not read Chemistry at university. You’ll really like that.

Stephen gave in. After all, he did like Chemistry too and if that was the route to a job maybe he should study it instead. So he worked hard, passed his final year exams and was accepted by Imperial College in London for a degree in Chemistry. His decision made, Stephen’s life compass was pointing in a new direction towards a destination he never really expected.

A change of plan

One year later a chance meeting changed everything. Seeing his former Physics teacher again was like encountering a storm at sea. Forget the Chemistry, Justin the teacher said. That’s not who you are. You are not cut out to be a scientist or to work in a big pharmaceutical company. You should never have been told to focus on Chemistry. Ever since I’ve known you, Stephen, designing and building ships has been your dream. At least go for a degree that is relevant and see where that takes you. I will help.

And he did. Stephen jumped ship. He changed course and started a new degree in Ship Science at the University of Southampton. Happier, motivated and excited by the prospect, within three years Stephen qualified as a naval architect. His dream of designing passenger ships was one big step closer but, before long, Stephen started to think he would be stuck. He would be working with ships alright, but in less exciting and demanding jobs than he had hoped. Small projects, nothing like what he had in mind.



In 1997 he agreed to give some lectures on a voyage of the QE2 from Southampton to New York. A last chance, he guessed, to relish the great liner experience and to relive his childhood passion. He knew that the QE2's days were numbered.

Don't give up!

He kept trying. Application after application. Rejection after rejection, until one day a cruise ship company called Carnival invited him to an interview. They had a position for a junior naval architect. Stephen can't remember exactly what he said in the interview but it's not difficult to imagine him bubbling with enthusiasm and bursting with knowledge of ships. How could Carnival appoint anyone else. They didn't. They recruited Stephen. He would now, after all, get his chance to work on and design a new generation of passenger ships. For ten years Stephen did just that. With each ship he simply became a better designer, having learned the lessons, the successes and the flaws of the previous one. He knew just how lucky he was to be spending every day doing what he loved.

That was when Stephen's life, and the miracle of that day in Bournemouth as a boy, became even more extraordinary. In 1995 Stephen found out that the famous ocean liner operator, Cunard, was in real trouble. The company was losing money and its fleet of old cruise ships, including the wonderful QE2 could be sold off. Who knows what would happen to them then. Maybe these ships were too old now and the time for their last voyage had come, as it had for the SS France and others before them.

But what of Cunard, thought Stephen. If Cunard failed, did that really mean the end of the great transatlantic liners with their style, their elegance and luxury, a cut above the cruise ships he had been working on? In 1997 he agreed to give some lectures on a voyage of the QE2 from Southampton to New York. A last chance, he guessed, to relish the great liner experience and to relive his childhood passion. He knew that the QE2's days were numbered.



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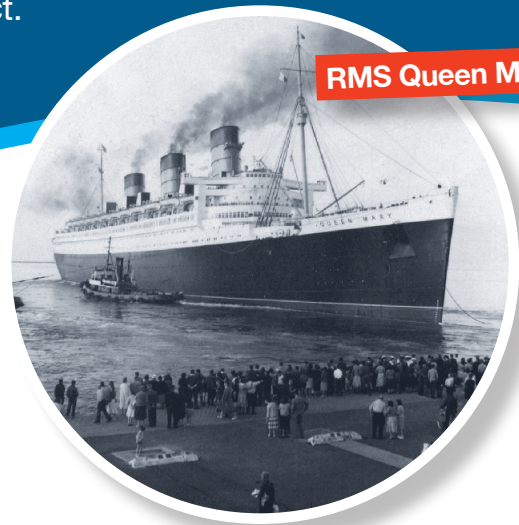
A dream come true

It was what happened when the ship docked in Southampton that caught him completely by surprise. He learned that his company had bought Cunard. And if that wasn't enough of a miracle, the fact that the Carnival chairman, Mickey Arison, wanted Stephen to design a new flagship luxury liner was the impossible coming true.

As if to make this the most daunting challenge ever, Mickey told Stephen that this new majestic ocean liner would be called Queen Mary 2. Stephen didn't just have to design a transatlantic liner. He didn't just have to design one that made a handsome profit so that Cunard and the very idea of great ocean liners could survive. He had to design one that bore the name of what was for many people simply the greatest ocean liner of all time, the Queen Mary.

Continued >

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Stephen, of course, knew the story of the Queen Mary by heart. As soon as he heard the name it all came flooding back again. A Cunard ship, made in Scotland at the John Brown shipyard in Clydebank, launched in September 1934. Her vital statistics came easily to him: 310.7 metres long; 81,237 tons; a cruising speed of 28.5 knots; 12 decks with a capacity for 1,957 passengers; 1,001 transatlantic crossings after her maiden voyage in 1936. Stephen even knew that it took more than 10 million rivets to build her and that she had more than 2,000 portholes. Finally retired in 1967, it saddened him to think of her as the floating hotel in California that she still is today. On the other hand, he reminded himself, thousands of visitors still had the opportunity to see and feel what the golden age of ocean liners was actually like.

Making magic happen

Could he be the person to conjure up that magic again, he wondered. He tried not to think of her too much when he started working on his own drawings and plans. It would have been too much of a distraction. After two hard years of planning he was ready to take his designs to five European shipyards to see which one would make the best job of making his vision of Queen Mary 2 a reality.

On these trips he did allow himself to think back to those accounts of the first Queen Mary builders he had read from the John Brown shipyards on the Clyde. For the welders, the cutters, the engineers, the carpenters, the electricians, so many different skilled men – not just the joy of having work, but the pride in building a ship that told the whole world how good their construction and craftsmanship was. They believed they were making history.

RMS Queen Mary: a Cunard ship

- Made in Scotland by John Brown shipyard, Clydebank
- Launched September 1934
- 1936, maiden voyage
- 12 decks holding
- 1,957 passengers
- 310.7m long and 81,237 tons
- 28.5 knots cruising speed
- 1,001 transatlantic crossings
- 10 million rivets
- 2,000 portholes
- 1967: retired and today a floating hotel in California

For Stephen his own deep sense of ocean liner history increased the pressure on him. So when he and his colleagues finally chose the French shipyard Chantier d'Atlantique, the same one that had built the luxurious SS France over fifty years before, it had to be right. And it was. In January 2004 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II named the new transatlantic liner that met and exceeded expectations, Queen Mary 2.



Could he be the person to conjure up that magic again? He tried not to think of her too much when he started working on his own plans... After two hard years of planning he was ready to take his designs to five European shipyards to see which would do the best job of making his vision of Queen Mary 2 a reality.

Not all plain sailing

Not everything worked out perfectly. Justin, the physics teacher who persuaded him to change course in favour of naval architecture, died just two months before the ship set sail. Stephen always gave credit to his team, but Justin’s death helped him understand even more clearly how lucky he was. His dream of designing a bigger and better ocean liner than the Queen Elizabeth wasn’t something that he could ever have achieved on his own. His dream was only possible thanks to his parents, to Justin and a huge team of people who shared his vision. “We all worked together for the common good, for the ship”, he said. “Certainly there were huge problems to overcome in designing this ship. After all she is a prototype but she was delivered on time, under budget and ready to enter service, which for a prototype ship this size is a near miracle.”



On that maiden voyage Blue Peter presented Stephen Payne, designer of Queen Mary 2, the largest and longest ocean liner ever built, with his gold Blue Peter badge.

A happy ending

To cap it all, Blue Peter came on board the maiden voyage and made a programme with all the facts and figures of Queen Mary 2: three and a half football pitches long; 41 metres wide; 73,000 tons in weight; a cost of \$780 million; three times the volume of the Titanic and twice the volume of the previous ‘queen’ ocean liners.

More than that. On that maiden voyage Blue Peter presented Stephen Payne, designer of Queen Mary 2, the largest and longest ocean liner ever built, with his gold Blue Peter badge.

Written by Laurence Brady
With thanks to Stephen Payne OBE



Stephen Payne OBE



Queen Mary 2