



Two Queen Elizabeths came face to face last week when the reigning monarch christened the latest Cunard liner.

In glorious sunshine at Southampton Docks, Cunard president Peter Shanks told a 2,000-strong crowd of VIPs at the naming of the line's third ship to carry the name *Queen Elizabeth*: "There is only one person here who can claim presence at all three *Elizabeth* namings and that person is Her Majesty The Queen."

Among the sea of famous faces were TV celebrities Esther Rantzen, Alans Titchmarsh and Whicker, Sir Jimmy Savile and Judith Chalmers. Carol Vorderman, who had already toured the ship, told **HELLO!** she found it "absolutely beautiful".

The Queen, wearing a turquoise Peter Enrione wool coat and matching hat by Angela Kelly, also had a guided tour of the spectacular, £400million new liner. Her host Peter told **HELLO!**: "Her Majesty put us at ease with a wonderful smile right from the outset and showed warm interest in the ship and our crew."

CHORUS OF APPROVAL

Back on dry land the guests were treated to music from opera singer Lesley Garrett, massed bands of the Coldstream and Scots Guards and trumpeters of the Irish Guards, as well as the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and chorus.

The Queen happily joined in the singing of *Jerusalem* before prayers were led by the Bishop of Winchester. Then in time-honoured tradition she stepped forward to the podium and declared: "I name this ship *Queen Elizabeth*. May God bless her and all who sail on her."

She pressed a button to release a jeroboam of white wine – a Baron Philippe de Rothschild Graves bottled specially for Cunard – that smashed against the side of the ship's bow. It is a Cunard ▶



AT A STAR-STUDED CEREMONY
THE QUEEN
CHRISTENS THE LUXURY LINER
NAMED IN HER HONOUR



The Queen, looking radiant in turquoise coat and matching hat, with a compass rose-shaped brooch befitting the occasion, arrives at Southampton Docks to name the third *Queen Elizabeth*. She was taken on board for a tour with Captain Chris Wells (top left) before christening the majestic liner with the traditional bottle smashing on the bow (above left)



Dominating the ship's Grand Lobby is a 19½ft art deco-style marquetry panel created by the Queen's furniture maker nephew Viscount Linley (above). Her Majesty stopped to admire the imposing piece during her tour of the new liner, where she was warmly welcomed by the ship's crew who cheered and applauded (right). The monarch also expressed approval for a new portrait (below right), much to the relief of the artist, Isobel Peachey



'QUEEN ELIZABETH' FACTS AND FIGURES

- The third *Queen Elizabeth* cost £400million to build
- The 16-deck ship is 964ft long – equivalent to 35 double decker buses – and weighs 90,400 tons
- It has a maximum speed of 23.7 knots
- There are 1,046 state rooms and 798 balconies
- The 997-strong crew includes 140 chefs who have to feed the more than 2,000 passengers
- In one year, passengers will consume 351,900 bottles of wine and champagne, 1½m eggs and almost 1m tea bags
- Tickets for the ship's maiden cruise, a 13-night Atlantic Isles voyage, cost from £1,489 to £15,799. They were snapped up in a record 29 minutes and 14 seconds when they went on sale in April last year

tradition to use wine instead of champagne.

Before the naming ceremony, former *Countdown* hostess Carol and Oscar-winning actor Sir Ben Kingsley were guests of honour at a special on-board lunch for 1,000. They had been invited in honour of their work for the Prince's Trust. Cunard has donated £535,000 to the charity over the past three years and has pledged to give another £500,000.

The lunch guests joined 1,000 further invitees while the *Queen* toured the massive vessel. On the



Carol Vorderman and actor Sir Ben Kingsley (left) were invited to the royal launch to mark their support of the Prince's Trust charity. The former *Countdown* queen described the new luxury liner as "absolutely beautiful". Opera star Lesley Garrett led the crowd in a rousing chorus of the national anthem at the lavish naming ceremony (right)





bridge she met Captain Christopher Wells, who asked her to sound the ship's horn. As the long blast boomed across the dock, the Queen said: "It's a much deeper sound than I imagined."

Peter told **HELLO!**: "The hooting of the ship's whistle was wonderful. As Her Majesty pushed the button she was surprised at the sound and we all heard warm laughter and applause from our 2,000 guests in the naming arena."

"She thought the ship was large but beautifully designed inside. As we walked through it was marvellous to see the look of pride on the faces of the ship's company as they applauded and cheered Her Majesty."

IMPOSING DESIGN

In the Grand Lobby the Queen paused to take in the imposing 19½ft high marquetry panel created by her nephew, the furniture designer Viscount Linley.

"It is a real honour to be asked to make such a significant piece for the *Queen Elizabeth*," the Viscount told **HELLO!**. "It is the largest single piece of work we have done and spans two and a half decks in height."

"The design depicts the original *Queen Elizabeth* with an artist's impression of the world and a rising sun in the background. It is art deco in stylistic influence, but with a modern freshness, and aims to

evoke the romance of transatlantic passenger travel of an era gone by," said the 48-year-old son of Princess Margaret and Lord Snowdon.

"I recall my father saying the interior design on the *Queen Elizabeth 2* made one proud to be British, so I'm hoping our achievement on the new ship will make him – and others – equally proud," he added.

Also in the Grand Lobby, the Queen saw a portrait of herself by artist Isobel Peachey, who had been granted three one-hour sittings in the Yellow Drawing Room at Buckingham Palace. "The Queen was gracious and she made me feel really welcome," recalls Isobel, 31. "I just knew that I had to try my best."

Said Peter: "As we approached the royal portrait Her Majesty mentioned that it was the first time she had seen it. It was quite a moment for Isobel, but there were smiles all round as it became clear that the Queen did indeed approve."

And with Her Majesty looking happy and relaxed during her visit it seems that royal approval extends to the rest of the new luxury liner. Britannia may no longer rule the waves, but the third *Queen Elizabeth* will proudly carry her name for the next three decades. **H**

REPORT: IAN LLOYD
AND SUSAN ROZSNYAI



PHOTOS: ARTHUR EDWARDS/THE SUN; GOFFPHOTOS; IAN LLOYD; PA PHOTOS; SOLO SYNDICATION; STEVE DUNLOP