

years from 1st January 1937, and the most significant part was an agreement to reduce, from the end of 1938, the contract time of the voyage from 16 days 15 hours to not more than 14 days. This called for bold measures. The two new ships ordered and due to enter service in 1936 would be the only ships in the fleet capable of accomplishing the voyage in this fast time. Eight ships were required for the service in place of the nine needed under the old timing. In March an order was placed for a further but larger ship of the Stirling Castle type, and a contract was entered into for the re-engining and partial reconstruction of five mailships—Arundel Castle, Windsor Castle, Carnarvon Castle, Winchester Castle and Warwick Castle. Service speed was to be increased by over three knots, which required something of the order of doubling the original engine power. With the three older ships, too, it was found necessary to lengthen the bow.

One by one the ships went over to Belfast for these changes. As they emerged when the work was completed they had undergone a complete transformation. For Arundel Castle and Windsor Castle their four slender funnels had been replaced by two larger but shorter funnels. For the three moteships, the two funnels had been replaced by a single funnel, gracefully raked.

With the launching in 1937 of the newest mailship came a further break in tradition. Hitherto the ships had been named after castles in the British Isles. As a gesture to South Africa, with whose prosperity the fortunes of the company were so intimately bound up, she was named Capetown Castle.

Accelerated Service

In August 1936 the Stirling Castle made history by accomplishing the voyage to Cape Town in 13 days 9 hours, breaking the sensational record set up by the Scot as far back as 1893. But this was no mere flash in the pan for the sake of breaking a record—it was the start of a new and faster service which would be maintained with the same regularity as the former schedule. The Stirling Castle and Athlone Castle maintained this schedule from then on, while other mailships, as they were returned from the shipbuilders, also undertook the faster passage. Capetown Castle came into service in 1938, and by the end of the year the new schedule was in full operation.

In 1939 came the second world war, and for seven years there was a break in the mail service.



Winchester Castle 20,001 tons 1939



Arundel Castle 19,216 tons 1921



Capetown Castle 27,002 tons 1938