

Plans for faster service

Shortly after the merger further orders for new mailships were placed. There had also appeared in the journal *South Africa*—little noticed at the time—a very interesting interview with Lord Rotherwick. In the course of the interview Lord Rotherwick revealed that the company were planning a further reduction in the time taken for the voyage between Southampton and Cape Town. This was to be reduced to 11½ days, and only seven ships would be required to operate the service. It would not be put into effect until all seven ships were able to do the faster passage, which required a service speed of 22½ knots. Of the older ships, only Edinburgh Castle and Pretoria Castle were capable of this speed. Penderis Castle could meet the requirements and the two ships on order—Windsor Castle and Transvaal Castle—were of course being designed for the new service. Two further ships were still needed.

In 1960 Windsor Castle—the third of that name in the fleet—came on the scene. In some respects her entry was inauspicious for she came at a time of industrial unrest. A major five-day shakedown cruise from the yard at Birkenhead was cancelled at the last moment by threat of a seamen's strike. A similar threat caused the ship to sail from Southampton an hour before her scheduled time, disrupting the elaborate preparations which had been made to give her a royal send-off.

But inauspicious beginning or no, Windsor Castle soon established her pride of place on the South African route. She was by far the largest ship to have a regular place on the route. Her interior design was a complete departure from anything that had gone before. Jean Munro had once again been responsible for decor, and she brought together a team of designers to assist her, Felix Kelly, Sidney Smith, Trevis Copplesstone, all contributed murals, while Michael Inchbald, designer of the River Room at the Savoy Hotel, was responsible for the tourist class Smoke Room. Everywhere Windsor Castle was received with acclaim, and soon during the peak booking period her passenger lists began to read like extracts from *Debut* or *Who's Who*.

Eighteen months after Windsor Castle joined the fleet there came Transvaal Castle from the yards of John Brown, where the great Queens were built. Transvaal Castle was to introduce an entirely new concept, and for her the description "Hotel Ship" was coined. There were no class barriers, but she differed from other one-class ships in that there was a full range of cabin accommodation as wide as on any two-class ship. As at a hotel you may book a suite on the first floor, or a very humble room at the back of the building, but still have the use of all the other amenities the hotel offers, so it was with Transvaal Castle. For this ship the decor had been shared between Jean Munro and Tom Parr. An innovation was the introduction of stewardettes to serve in the dining room.



Windsor Castle Drawing Room



S.A. Vail Orangery

