

27th February 2024

Mary

"The power of grace, the magic of a name."

Thomas Campbell, *The Pleasure of Hope*

I've been scolded! Having offered *two* pieces recently based on memories of the TS *King George V* steamer, my wife said, "But what about her sister?" Puzzled (and not just by the tradition that ships are given the feminine pronoun, even with a male name), I was told that, in the interests of balance, I *had* to write a piece about the sister ship, the TS *Queen Mary*.

Not exactly a full sister (built by another company to a different spec) there are still similarities between the two vessels, as well as one major difference. TS *Queen Mary* was a "Clyde Steamer" launched in 1933 at the William Denny shipyard in Dumbarton for "Williamson-Buchanan Steamers". For several decades she carried over 13,000 passengers a week from Glasgow's Bridge Warf to the Island of Arran or the Kyles of Bute, through the Firth of Clyde – "doon the watter", as they say. She is now being painstakingly restored (with the Princess Royal as her Patron) at Glasgow's Princes' Dock. The aim is to return her to active service. For not only will she carry passengers, but she will also be a skills and training cadet ship for young people. (See <https://tsqueenmary.org.uk>)

Sister ships, with lots of similarities – size, location, purpose, pleasure and usefulness. But ... In 1935, the Cunard Line asked Williamson-Buchanan to change the name of TS *Queen Mary* to TS *Queen Mary II*, to make the name available for their new flagship liner, due to be launched by Queen Mary, and the owners agreed. So, here's the major difference – the TS *Queen Mary* had a name-change. She (or those who spoke for her) was gracious enough to have her name altered for a bigger purpose. Was the public's affection for her diminished? Not at all. Was she now a poor second to a bigger, and more prestigious, ocean-going liner? No, she was not. She remained what she was – and still is – a lovely lady, doing good work, and being much appreciated by thousands of people over the years.

Names change. Styles alter. Purpose varies. But substance, value, worth and affection remain. The "power of grace" for the *Queen Mary* is *more* important than "the magic of a name" – and I suspect those who are currently restoring her will say "Amen!" to that.

A prayer for today

And me, Lord? "You are my child!" Goodness! That's a name I'll have to live up to.

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