

RMS *Etruria*

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

RMS *Etruria* and her sister ship RMS *Umbria* were the last two Cunarders that were fitted with auxiliary sails.^[1] RMS *Etruria* was built by John Elder & Co of Glasgow, Scotland in 1884. The *Etruria* and her sister *Umbria*, by the standards of the time, were record breakers. They were the largest liners then in service, and they plied the Liverpool to New York Service. RMS *Etruria* was completed and launched in March 1885, twelve weeks later than her sister *Umbria*.

The *Etruria* had many distinguishing features that included two enormous funnels which gave the outward impression of huge power. She also had three large steel masts which when fully rigged had an extensive spread of canvas. Another innovation on *Etruria* was that she was equipped with refrigeration machinery, but it was the single screw propulsion that would bring the most publicity later in her career.

The ship epitomized the luxuries of Victorian style. The public rooms in First Class were full of ornately carved furniture and heavy velvet curtains hung in all the rooms, and they were cluttered with bric-a-brac that period fashion dictated. These rooms, and the First Class cabins, were situated on the Promenade, Upper, Saloon and Main Decks. There was also a Music Room, Smoke Room for gentlemen, and separate dining rooms for First and Second Class passengers. By the standard of the day, Second Class accommodation was moderate, but spacious and comfortable. RMS *Etruria's* accommodation consisted of 550 First Class, and 800 Second Class passengers. However late in 1892 this changed to 500 First Class, 160 Second Class, and 800 Third Class (Steerage) passengers.

Contents

- 1 Service on the Atlantic
- 2 Winston Churchill
- 3 A year to forget
- 4 More bad luck
- 5 The end of *Etruria's* Career
- 6 The Blue Riband
- 7 References
- 8 External links



RMS *Etruria*

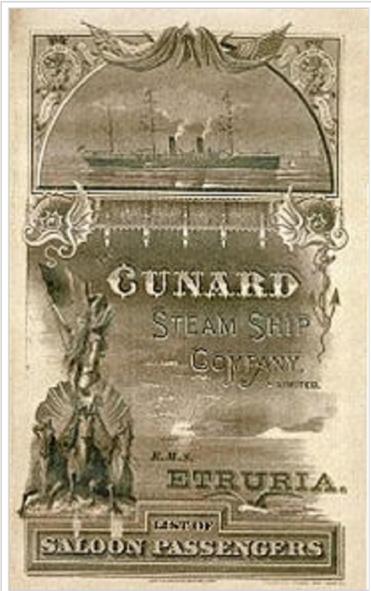
Career

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Name: | RMS <i>Etruria</i> |
| Owner: | British & North American Royal Mail Packet Company (Cunard Line) |
| Port of registry: | British |
| Ordered: | 1883 |
| Builder: | Messrs John Elder & Co., Glasgow |
| Yard number: | 286 |
| Launched: | 20 September 1884 |
| Completed: | March 1885 |
| Maiden voyage: | 25 April 1885 |
| Out of service: | August 1908 |
| Fate: | Scrapped in 1910 |

General characteristics

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Class and type: | Ocean liner |
| Tonnage: | 7,718 gross tons |
| Length: | 158.2 m (519 ft) |
| Beam: | 17.43 m (57.2 ft) |
| Decks: | 5 |
| Installed power: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 9 double-ended boilers ■ 6 three-crank compound |

Service on the Atlantic



Front cover of a passenger list for a voyage of the RMS *Etruria*

RMS *Etruria* was to start her regular service to New York from Liverpool, but the clouds of crises were looming, and by the New Year of 1885 a crises involving Russia's threat to invade Afghanistan was coming to a head. This was to bring *Etruria's* North Atlantic service to a halt temporarily, before she had even made her maiden voyage. On the 26 March, *Etruria*, and her sister RMS

Umbria, found themselves chartered to the Admiralty. With the dispute reaching a settlement, *Etruria* was released from Admiralty service within a few days, although her sister was retained for six months.

On the 25 April 1885, *Etruria* finally made her maiden voyage under the command of Captain McMicken. She made the Atlantic crossing calling at Queenstown (Cobh). On her very next crossing, westbound (Liverpool to New York), she won the prestigious Blue Riband (see the table below) and proudly flew the pennant for Cunard.

Later in the year the *Etruria* was involved in a collision. On 20 September 1885, she was outward bound from New York and in Lower New York Bay, at anchor due to dense fog. The 4,276 ton cargo ship *Canada*, owned by the National Steamship Company of Limerick collided with the *Etruria*, on her starboard side. The *Canada* scraped alongside *Etruria*, ripping away a portion of her rigging, but fortunately there were no casualties. Both ships continued on their voyages.

Winston Churchill

In November 1895, 20-year-old Winston Churchill, a lieutenant in the 4th Hussars, snatched a few weeks' leave from his regiment to visit Cuba, with the aim of observing the Cuban Revolutionary War against Spain.

Getting there involved travelling by way of New York via Liverpool and Queenstown on the *Etruria*. Thus, on 9 November, Winston Churchill arrived in New York harbour aboard the *Etruria*, and first set foot in his mother's homeland and the city where she had been born and brought up. Three days later he travelled on to Cuba. Churchill returned to Britain early in 1896 travelling again on the *Etruria*.

On 6 January 1900, *Etruria* left Liverpool, and one week later she arrived in New York. On the 13th engineers were inspecting the ship, and on examination of the propeller shaft, they found cracks that were not there when the ship left Liverpool. Her sister ship had suffered a failure of her propeller shaft at sea in

engines

Propulsion: single propeller

Speed: 19 knots (35 km/h)

Capacity:

1885-1892:

- 550 First Class
- 800 Second Class

1892-1909:

- 500 First Class
- 160 Second Class
- 800 Third Class

An extract from a Letter written by Churchill to his mother about life aboard R.M.S. Etruria near the end of the voyage

"I do not contemplate ever taking a sea voyage for pleasure and shall always look upon journeys by sea as necessary evils which have to be undergone carrying out of any definite plan" While his cabin was "not uncomfortable" the ship lacked a "comfortable place to sit down and an interesting occupation" while on board though it was his fellow passengers that were most vexing. "there are no nice people on board to speak of, certainly none to write of.....There is to be a concert on board tonight at which all the stupid people among the passengers intend to perform and the stupider ones applaud. The days have seemed very long and uninteresting"

An extract of a letter written aboard RMS *Etruria* by Winston Churchill

1893, and do avoid the same fate the *Etruria* was confined to her pier until a replacement shaft was shipped over from Britain. After this was done, and the new shaft had been fitted in New York, she departed on 17 February for the homeward bound service. In 1900 the *Etruria* remained on the North Atlantic service while her sister was requisitioned to carry troops to and from South Africa during the Boer War. By July 1900 both the sisters were back on the North Atlantic service.

A year to forget

In 1901 the *Etruria*, along with her sister ship, was fitted with a wireless, putting her right in the forefront of this new technology. On the 22 February 1902, *Etruria* left New York and was due to arrive in Queenstown on 1 March. On the 26 February she radioed the *Umbria* to pass on messages to one of her passengers. However, that evening her propeller shaft fractured leaving her drifting helplessly. She tried with no success to radio the *Umbria* again to report her predicament. In the days before the *Titanic* disaster, radio operators did not man their sets 24 hours a day. Eventually she managed to attract the attention of the Leyland ship *William Cliff*, by firing distress rockets. The *William Cliff* stood alongside in an hour and stayed with her during the night whilst attempts were made to repair her. *Etruria* then made sail and the *William Cliff* took her in tow; the ships headed for Horta, in the Azores, which were 500 miles to the south-east of her stricken position.



The *Etruria* at sea with her sails hoisted

She arrived in the Azores on Sunday, 9 March, and on the 15th her passengers and mail were transferred on to SS *Elbe*, which had been chartered for the task on the 10th. It was summer 1902 before the *Etruria* was repaired and back in service, but in October, after a particularly rough Atlantic crossing, her propeller shaft again showed serious cracks and she was taken out of service and waited in New York for yet another new shaft to be sent over and installed. It was the 1 November before she set sail for home again, 1902 had been a very bad year for the ship.

More bad luck

1903 did not start too well for the *Etruria* either. On the 28 February she was leaving New York and ran aground on sand and mud in the entrance to Gedney Channel. Fortunately, after she was refloated later the same day there was no damage found and she set off on her voyage to Liverpool.

Later in the year, on the 10 October, the *Etruria* was only four hours out of New York when at 2:30pm the ship was struck by a rogue wave. The wave was reported to be at least 50 feet high, and struck the ship on the port side. The wave carried away part of the fore bridge and smashed the guardrail stanchions. A number of First Class passengers were sitting in deck chairs close to the bridge, and they caught the full force of the water. One passenger, a Canadian, was fatally injured, and several other passengers were hurt.

January 1907 saw the death of two of *Etruria's* sailors as they tried to secure the lashings of the starboard anchor in very rough weather, during a westbound crossing.

The end of *Etruria's* Career

The two 23-year-old sisters were now getting to the point where technical progress had well and truly overtaken

them. The RMS *Lusitania* and *Mauretania* were off the drawing board, were slowly taking shape, and were due to enter service in late 1907.

On Wednesday the 26 August 1908, RMS *Etruria* was moving astern from her pier in Liverpool to anchor opposite the Princes' Landing Stage, where her passengers would embark. Unfortunately a hopper crossing the Mersey came too close to the *Etruria* and was violently rammed by her. *Etruria's* rudder and propeller were thrust deep into the hopper, almost severing it in two. However, being impaled on the *Etruria's* propeller prevented the hopper from sinking. Both vessels drifted helplessly in the Mersey, and the hopper was violently crushed against the landing stage. This not only spelt the end for the hopper, but finished the career of the *Etruria* as well. Her propeller, rudder and steering gear were seriously damaged, and the accident put paid to any idea of her sailing to New York. *Etruria's* passengers were put up in hotels and then caught the *Umbria* later in the week. As for the *Etruria*, she was taken into dock, where temporary repairs were made.

She would not cross the Atlantic again, and after spending time laid up^[2] at Birkenhead, she was finally sold for the sum of £16,750 in October 1909. On the 10 October 1910, the Mersey tug *Black Cock* took the *Etruria* in tow to her final destination of Preston, Lancashire, where she was broken up.

| Prices of passage aboard RMS <i>Etruria</i> , May 1895 | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| From Pier 40, North River, foot of Clarkson Street, City of New York | | | | | | | | | | |
| Every Saturday, New York-Queenstown-Liverpool | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1st Class | 1st Class | 1st Class | 1st Class Return | 1st Class Return | 1st Class Return | 2nd Class Cabin | 2nd Class Cabin | 2nd Class Cabin Return | 2nd Class Cabin Return | Under 1 Year old |
| \$75 | \$90 | \$175 | \$125 | \$150 | \$315 | \$40 | \$45 | \$75 | \$85 | Free outward |

The Blue Riband

| Records of RMS <i>Umbria</i> & RMS <i>Etruria</i> | | | | | | | |
|---|------------------|--------|------------|------------|----------------|---------------------|-------|
| The Blue Riband of the North Atlantic | | | | | | | |
| Westbound | | | | | | | |
| Steamer | Date | Line | From | To | Nautical Miles | Days/Hours /Minutes | Knots |
| <i>RMS Etruria</i> | 1885 (16/8-22/8) | Cunard | Queenstown | Sandy Hook | 2801 | 6/5/31 | 18.73 |
| <i>RMS Umbria</i> | 1887 (29/5-4/6) | Cunard | Queenstown | Sandy Hook | 2848 | 6/4/12 | 19.22 |
| <i>RMS Etruria</i> | 1888 (27/5-2/6) | Cunard | Queenstown | Sandy Hook | 2854 | 6/1/55 | 19.56 |
| Eastbound | | | | | | | |

| Steamer | Date | Line | From | To | Nautical Miles | Days/Hours /Minutes | Knots |
|----------------|-----------------|--------|------------|------------|----------------|---------------------|-------|
| <i>Etruria</i> | 1885 (1/8-7/8) | Cunard | Sandy Hook | Queenstown | 2822 | 6/9/0 | 18.44 |
| <i>Etruria</i> | 1888 (7/7-14/7) | Cunard | Sandy Hook | Queenstown | 2981 | 6/4/50 | 19.36 |

References

- ↑ http://www.chriscunard.com/archives1.htm#Umbria RMS Umbria Information
- ↑ http://www.chriscunard.com/archives1.htm#Etruria RMS Etruria Information

External links

- Cunard Heritage site (http://www.atlanticliners.com/cunard_home.htm)
- MaritimeQuest RMS Etruria Photo Gallery (http://maritimequest.com/liners/etruria_1884/rms_etruria_1884.htm)
- (SS Etruria, 1885 - 1909 ; 7,718 tons) (http://www.chriscunard.com/etruria.php)

| Records | | |
|------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Preceded by <i>Oregon</i> | Atlantic Eastbound Record 1885–1889 | Succeeded by <i>City of Paris</i> |
| | Holder of the Blue Riband (Westbound) 1885–1887 | Succeeded by <i>Umbria</i> |
| Preceded by <i>Umbria</i> | Holder of the Blue Riband (Westbound) 1888–1889 | Succeeded by <i>City of Paris</i> |

Retrieved from "http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=RMS_Etruria&oldid=466387441"

Categories: Passenger ships of the United Kingdom | Steamships | Ships of the Cunard Line

Victorian era passenger ships of the United Kingdom | World War I passenger ships of the United Kingdom | Blue Riband holders | Rogue wave incidents | 1885 ships

- This page was last modified on 17 December 2011 at 19:58.
 - Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. See Terms of use for details.
- Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.