



Liner Memorabilia

MEMENTOES OF LUXURIOUS CRUISES TO FARAWAY PLACES
CAN GIVE MODERN COLLECTORS A FASCINATING INSIGHT
INTO THE GOLDEN AGE OF TRAVEL

Compared in their day with the speed and sleekness of greyhounds, ocean liners have become legends of luxury and romance. They are the ghosts of a more leisurely age which passed with the coming of the jet aeroplane, and they have inspired souvenir-makers and collectors from the 19th century to the present.

FASTEST CROSSING

The early trans-Atlantic steamship companies paid little heed to passenger comfort. Instead, they competed for the fastest crossing time: 21 days when Canadian-born Samuel Cunard sent the *Royal William* to Liverpool in 1833, and 14½ days in Brunel's wooden-hulled *Great Western* five years later. Brunel started the *Great*

Western Steamship Company so that people could continue their journey west from Bristol after travelling by train from London. His regular service from Bristol to New York cost £31/10/- including cabin and food and the eastbound journey averaged 13.9 days.

The Cunard Company was Brunel's main rival. Joined by three partners in the 1830s, Samuel Cunard proposed a year-round fortnightly service with three steam ships running from Liverpool to Boston, so winning a valuable contract from the British government. Other competitors on the North Atlantic route included the Inman Line whose ships were so luxurious that the company eventually went bankrupt.

During the gold rush of 1851, a ship-broking firm, the National Steam Navigation Company, sent steamers from England to Australia. Better known as the White Star Line (their company flag was red with a white star in the middle), it had a virtual monopoly at shipbuilders Harland and Wolff in Belfast and its liners were renowned for their comfort.

EXPRESS RUN

As the North Atlantic crossing was saturated by the 1870s, the White Star Line operated voyages to India too. In 1902 it came under American ownership but retained its British flag. The Company started an express run to New York from Southampton in 1907, and gradually all transatlantic crossings from England started there instead of in Liverpool. By 1912, White Star could boast the biggest ships in the world: the *Olympic*, the *Titanic* and the *Britannic*. The fate of the second is well-known and the *Britannic* went down in the Mediterranean before its first commercial run. Hit by these disasters, followed by the Depression in the 1930s, the White Star Line was unable to continue on its own, and finally merged with Cunard in 1934.

Apart from these two big companies, there were several smaller British firms that operated from Southampton. The Pacific and Orient Steamship Company, more easily recognized as P & O, was founded in 1837. Serving routes to the Far East, it took people from England via Suez and Aden to Bombay, then on to Fremantle, Melbourne and Sydney.

In 1900, the Union Steam Collier

Company joined forces with the Castle Mail Packets Company to cope with increasing trade with South Africa. The Union-Castle Mail Steamship Company (better known as the Union-Castle Line) ran its ships from Southampton to Capetown and Durban. The Company's headquarters, Union Castle House, can still be seen near Southampton Docks.

FROM STEERAGE TO FIRST CLASS

Though in the 1840s most passenger ships were renowned as 'stinking hell holes' where typhus raged, living quarters quickly improved even for third-class travellers. By the 1880s the majority of the poorer passengers were immigrants from the Balkans, Ireland, Italy and eastern Europe.

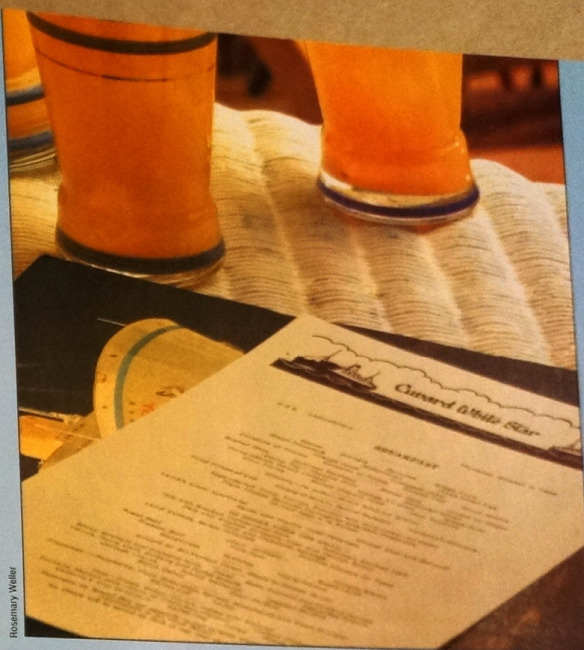
seeking a new life in America. They had to lodge in the steerage – the cheapest quarters on board – and though this was no luxury, they could at least expect food and a bed.

On the way back the first class cabins were now being filled by wealthy American businessmen. Keen to enjoy the riches accumulated over decades of steady economic growth in the United States, they came to Europe to wonder at its antiquities, getting a foretaste of its ancient culture while relaxing in the increasingly sumptuous accommodation provided by Cunard, the

▼ Once on board ship, passengers could do as little or as much as they pleased. Some would choose solitary pursuits, such as sunbathing on deck, while others would throw themselves wholeheartedly into a range of organized activities – such as ballroom dancing, playing deck games and gambling.

► Travelling first class on a Cunard White Star liner, and being pampered by the staff while basking in the sun on deck, was a luxury coveted by many and experienced by few. Souvenirs such as menus brought home from the cruise of a lifetime reflect a bygone romantic age and are popular collectables today.

Rosemary Weber



Mauretania Dining Chair

THIS HANDSOME MAHOGANY DINING CHAIR COMES FROM THE OCEAN LINER MAURETANIA, c.1915. UPHOLSTERED IN RED PLUSH VELVET, WITH PADDED ARMRESTS, IT IS DECORATED WITH PANELS OF CARVED ACANTHUS LEAVES.



Rosemary Weber



White Star Line and their major rivals.

The fun and glamour associated with sea travel reached its height in the 1920s and '30s. The French Line's *Île de France* and *Normandie*, both masterpieces of post-war interior design, were particular favourites with the rich and famous. The transatlantic passenger lists of these 'floating cities' were studded with the names of film stars, actors and musicians as well as those who wanted to rub shoulders with such an illustrious clientele on the four-day crossing.

OFFICIAL SOUVENIRS

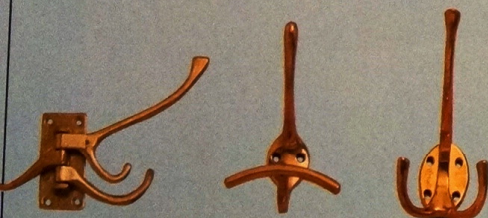
The aura of these cruises lingers in the popular imagination through old films and books and a cornucopia of objects now sought-after as souvenirs. Many official souvenirs were produced by the companies themselves for sale on the voyage. These included posters, prints, photographs and postcards, toys and models as well as mugs, ashtrays and paperweights, all emblazoned with the company's name and badge or a picture of the liner involved.

Unofficial souvenirs were more inventive and could range from pieces of cutlery or saucers smuggled from the dining room to sections of Art Deco wall panelling, virtually any unscrewable brass fitting, ships' steering-wheels, bells, nameplates and flags – anything that gave a whiff of these magnificent vessels and their exotic ambience. Even elegantly illustrated menus and wine lists, programmes of concerts and organized games reflected the luxury of an ocean cruise.

Glass and Metal Memorabilia

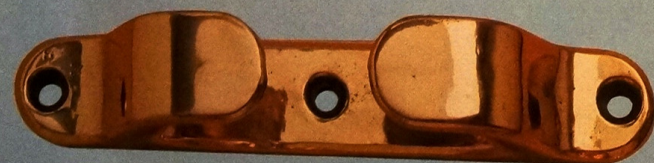
Model ships have always been among the most popular souvenirs of ocean voyages, and not just in the age of steam. During the Napoleonic Wars, captured sailors used to make extraordinarily accurate models of square-rigged ships out of bone and straw. In the 20th century, shipping companies sold model liners on board as children's mementoes and often displayed replicas up to 20 feet (6 m) long of their vessels in their head offices. These larger models were usually protected in glass cases and are eagerly sought-after by collectors today.

Between the 1890s and the 1940s, several European and American tinplate manufacturers made mechanical toy boats, including liners, which had clockwork motors. But memorabilia from real ocean liners includes objects as varied as paintings that were commissioned by the owners, barometers in their brass stands, flags, life-belts, fittings and furnishings of all kinds. Specially designed wall panelling and stamped glass decorations from the 1920s and 1930s are particularly valuable and the most interesting may find their way into museums.



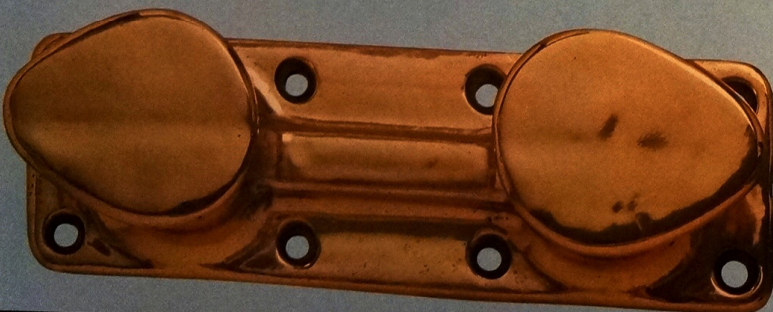
◀ Brass clothes hooks, such as these three examples, would have been found in each cabin on board ship. The price is for each hook.

PRICE GUIDE 2



◀ A brass cleat, made c. 1930. It was used for guiding ropes, rather than securing them.

PRICE GUIDE 5



◀ A brass bollard, made c. 1930. Its function was for tethering ropes in a figure of eight.

PRICE GUIDE 7

PRICE GUIDE



▶ A pair of wall lights with switches. The frosted glass shade with its chrome surround is mounted on a wooden base. The price is for each light.

PRICE GUIDE 4

▶ This small 1930s searchlight, made from glass and brass, was used in foggy weather to locate obstacles and markers.

PRICE GUIDE 6



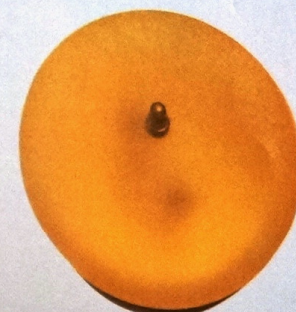
▼ A brass bulkhead light fixture, without its bulb. It was possibly used as a reading lamp over the cabin berth.

PRICE GUIDE 5



▶ This bulkhead light was screwed to the ceiling. It has a frosted glass shade and a chrome fixture.

PRICE GUIDE 6



◀ This large rectangular porthole from around 1930 has a brass frame which was screwed to the wall. Its reinforced glass window could not be opened.

PRICE GUIDE 6



▲ A small round porthole, made from brass. It has a glass window which could be levered open for air.

PRICE GUIDE 4



▲ This brass bulkhead reading lamp, fitted above a berth, has an adjustable shade. It was made in the 1930s.

PRICE GUIDE 4

PRICE GUIDE

Shipping memorabilia attracts collectors of all ages and from all walks of life, each of whom may spend a few pounds or hundreds per item, according to their means and inclination.

For those with little money and storage space, postcards and cigarette cards make an easy and interesting choice. Shipping companies frequently had postcards printed with photographs or paintings of their liners reproduced on the front. Some of the artists involved were well-known marine painters. They included Montague Black, Charles Dixon, James Mann, Walter Thomas and Norman Wilkinson (who invented 'dazzle' camouflage for British ships in the First World War).

Shipboard ephemera such as ashtrays, cutlery, wine glasses and coasters, key-rings, china tea sets as well as the printed leaflets and menu cards are all sought after. Collections of one or other of these categories can have great curiosity value without becoming too unwieldy or expensive.

COMPANY MODELS

For those with more money and a lot of room, company models are very attractive and often appear at the special marine sales held by the largest auction houses once or twice a year. Even though each model can be over 10 feet (3m) long, there are

COLLECTOR'S TIPS

collectors who have accumulated dozens of them over many years. They are not easy to display, for unlike the smaller models they cannot be placed on a mantelpiece. Collectors must have a large space available to display models, preferably with protection against prying fingers.

COMPARISONS

Souvenir Cards



SOUVENIR CARDS OF ALL DESCRIPTIONS WERE ALWAYS AVAILABLE. THIS PLAYING CARD (RIGHT) WITH AN EXOTIC ILLUSTRATION, IS FROM A PACK SOLD ON A P&O 'EASTERN HIGHWAY' CRUISE. THE CUNARD POSTCARD (ABOVE) OF RMS AUSONIA SHOWS THE IMPOSING LINER IN TYPICAL OUTLINE.



Rosemary Walker

Steamer Chair

THIS WICKER AND BAMBOO STEAMER CHAIR WAS MADE IN THE 1920S. THE SHIP'S DECKS WOULD HAVE BEEN LINED WITH SIMILAR CHAIRS, INVITING PASSENGERS TO RECLINE AND TAKE THE SUN. THE CHAIR HAS AN EXTENDING FOOTSTOOL AS WELL AS AN ADJUSTABLE BACKREST - UPRIGHT FOR THOSE WISHING TO READ, AND SEMI- OR FULLY RECLINING FOR SUNBATHING.

- 1 THE SEAT, BACK AND ARMRESTS ARE MADE FROM WOVEN WICKER.
- 2 THE EXTENDING DETACHABLE FOOTSTOOL ALLOWED PASSENGERS TO RECLINE WITH THEIR FEET UP.
- 3 THE ADJUSTABLE BACKREST HAS THREE NOTCHES FOR DIFFERENT HEIGHTS.
- 4 BENT STEAMED BAMBOO CANES ARE USED FOR EXTRA SUPPORT ON THE FRAME.



Rosemary Walker

Other types of replica include half-models which consist of a section of the vessel cut lengthways and mounted on a mirror, or the original working models made by the designers to show the interior in cross-section. These kinds of models are popular with the owners of pubs and hotels,

•CLOSE UP•



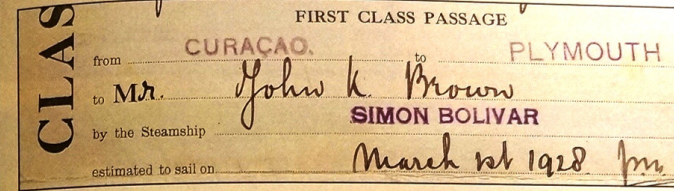
1 PRINTED HEADREST



2 QUEEN MARY SPOON HANDLE



3 P&O MATCHES



4 FIRST CLASS TICKET



5 HINGED CLOTHES HOOK

- 1 EVERY ITEM OF FURNITURE ON BOARD SHIP WAS STAMPED OR MARKED WITH THE COMPANY NAME.
- 2 THIS SUGAR SPOON HANDLE HAS A MINIATURE IMAGE OF THE QUEEN MARY ON THE END.
- 3 A P&O MATCHBOOK, EVERY MATCH PRINTED WITH THE NAMES OF EXOTIC DESTINATIONS.
- 4 A SECTION OF A FIRST CLASS TICKET FOR THE SIMON BOLIVAR, SAILING FROM THE ISLAND OF CURAÇAO IN THE CARIBBEAN TO PLYMOUTH.
- 5 THIS HINGED BRASS CLOTHES HOOK CAN BE FLATTENED AGAINST THE CABIN WALL WHEN NOT IN USE, SPACE BEING AT A PREMIUM ON BOARD SHIP.

Rosemary Walker

as are ships' bells and steering-wheels, paintings, prints and ship-board notices.

INGENIOUS DESIGNS

Mechanical tin toys are harder to come by and therefore more expensive. Their quality varies greatly but the best and most ingenious designs are becoming sought-after as antiques, for they appeal to the old as well as the young. The finest collection of these little vessels can be seen in New York at the Forbes Magazine Galleries, 60 Fifth Avenue. The display contains nearly 500 masted ships, submarines, gaily-decorated paddle steamers and bath toys as well as ocean liners, all beautifully presented in imaginary seas, rivers and tubs. Märklin, Bing, Fleischmann, Carette, Arnold, Radiguet, Ives and Orkin are among the most well-known manufacturers.

As with any form of collecting, the most important thing is to choose an area that you are interested in personally. Many people specialize in items from one specific company or ship, concentrating either on

hardware such as silver or china, or on printed paper souvenirs.

In London, the major auction houses all hold one or two marine auctions a year, usually to coincide with the Boat Show or Cowes Week. Specialist shops dealing with liner memorabilia are also worth visiting, and would help prospective collectors to get a feel for the range and availability of their chosen objects.

POINTS TO WATCH

- Repairs can lower the value of some objects, so if you are buying for investment it is better not to alter anything unless it is too badly broken to display.
- Repainting considerably reduces the value of tin toys.
- The characteristically heavy china used by shipping companies can be repaired by any reputable mender.
- Damaged or broken ship models should only be mended by experts. Contact one of the maritime museums around the country for a list of these professionals.

■ Posters are best kept either framed or rolled up in cardboard tubes. Folding them will damage the image. Labels and other paper ephemera should be kept unfolded in albums with plastic leaves.

► This 1920s ceramic hand basin with its wooden cupboard and lid would have been found in many a cabin on board ship. A bowl was placed in the cupboard below to collect the water used for washing. When not in use, it could be discreetly covered with the lid, making it look like a small wooden cupboard.



Rosemary Walker