

# Here come the war brides



## Cunard at War

War brides

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With most eligible bachelors fighting overseas, young women were swept off their feet when the GI Joes and Canadians in their dashing uniforms arrived for training. The foreigners offered romance, excitement and escape. Despite the disapproval of the US authorities and many parents, within months these whirlwind romances were often sealed by marriage before the handsome strangers departed for the war zones.

After the repatriation of troops at the end of the War in Europe, thousands of teenage brides and their babies were shipped 'across the Pond' to North America to join their new husbands. Hastily fitted out with nurseries and nappies, many Cunarders joined the happy convoy.

From January, 1946 the Queen Mary alone shipped 12,886 GI brides and their babies to America and 10,000 to Canada. On this mission of joy, she made her fastest crossing ever in only three days, twenty two hours and forty minutes.

For brides, it was a voyage charged with emotion, a brief pause between the tears of parting and stepping ashore in an unknown land.

*'The fare was forty two pounds. At that time she was a troopship so no cameras allowed. There were very few civilians on board but there were thousands of GIs so the ship was very crowded so it was hard to walk on deck for the troops sitting in groups on deck gambling.'*

Doreen A Flowers, sailed as GI Bride on October 2 1944 from Greenock to NY

*'It is an experience I shall never forget. On the 12th January, 1945 we sailed in to New York Harbour to the strains of "Twelfth Street Rag" - belted out by a brass band on shore - requested by the service men on board. Thank you Cunard for my memorable journey to the United States of America and for the safety of all on board.'*

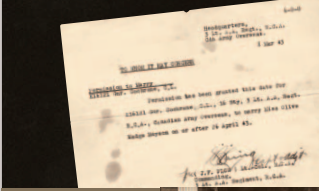
Doris Biller, Bangor war bride, Aquitania, 1945.

*'Our first meal on board was very enjoyable; the dining room was really lovely. We were served turkey and all the trimmings - white rolls, which I hadn't seen for a long time.'*

Joni Jones, Canadian war bride.

*'I enjoyed the voyage, the meals were unbelievably tasty - we were still on rations in England. Games were organized, entertainment provided each day and the crew always ready to help. I was assigned to a cabin on A deck. The lower decks were filled with people emigrating to Canada and the US - hoping for a better life.'*

Collette Egan, sailed from Liverpool to Canada as a War bride in 1946.

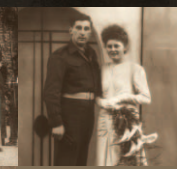


**Right:** Doris Reeg is flanked by her fellow land army girls. They felled trees, ploughed fields, hoed vegetables and rationed goods, replacing agricultural workers called up for active service.

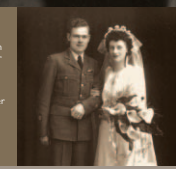


**Left:** For lovers on different sides of the Atlantic, official documents like these were the passport to happiness.

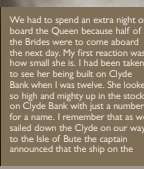
**Main image:** There was no escaping daily life boat drill.



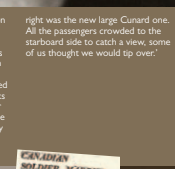
**Mrs Nan (née Smith) Reed**  
Right: My parents and young sister accompanied me to London where I was to stay in a hostel for Canadian Brides. Our parting was wrenching but as the bus pulled away I found I was one of only a few who were dry eyed. My father was very proud of that, but he would not have been if he had seen me after the lights were put out later that evening.



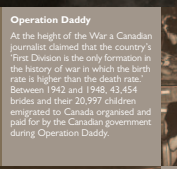
**Mrs Joni Lily (née Jones) Shuttleworth**  
Right: I lived 28 miles from Liverpool, but I was to leave from Southampton on the Queen Mary. By now I really didn't want to leave as my Dad had got so attached to my son. I felt as though I was deserting him. I was very impressed with the Queen Mary and with the cabin I was to share with two others. After looking around the



**Mrs Olive (née Rayson) Cochrane**  
Right: My mother was always proud that she and my oldest brother, Paul, came to Canada aboard the Queen Mary. During my father's post World War II career with the RCAF they would cross the Atlantic a couple more times by ship, but nothing ever compared in her memory to the Queen Mary.



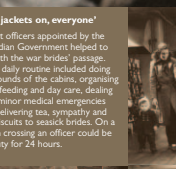
**Mrs Mabel (née Price) Mann**  
Right: As a War Bride married to a Canadian soldier, I travelled to Canada on the Queen Mary in July 1946. We boarded the Queen Mary at Southampton and even though the war was over, sailings were still not published. However, my sister's father-in-law had been in the Merchant Marine and managed to learn the same ship would sail. Imagine my surprise when I was paged just before sailing to come up to the top deck and there on a balcony on the dock were my mother, sister, brother-in-law and niece to see me off. I remember shouting to my mum, "We're having a big turkey dinner, mum." It was amazing. I hadn't seen so much food in years. The anchor was raised and I stood and watched the big white handkerchief my mother was waving until I couldn't see it any more.



**Mrs Rosa (Aerts) Roy**  
Above: "What an experience to travel on a ship like the Queen Mary! We had a lot of soap to wash ourselves which we did not have during the war and the food was out of this world. Only one thing was wrong; we did not know how to eat cornflakes because we had never seen them before!"



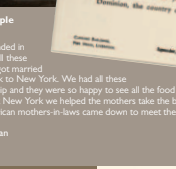
**Mrs Joni Lily (née Jones) Shuttleworth**  
ship I felt I was really going to enjoy the trip. Our first meal on board was very enjoyable, the dining room was really lovely. We were served turkey and all the trimmings, white rolls, which I hadn't seen for a long time, and I considered myself very fortunate to be on such a lovely ship. Unfortunately that was the only meal I had, as I became very seasick once we were underway. My son had to be taken to the nursery, as I was unable to



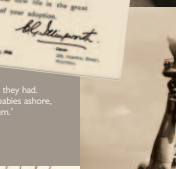
**Operation Daddy**  
As the height of the War a Canadian journalist claimed that the country's First Division is the only formation in the history of war in which the birth rate is higher than the death rate. Between 1942 and 1946, 43,454 brides and their 20,977 children emigrated to Canada organised and paid for by the Canadian government during Operation Daddy.



**'Life jackets on everyone'**  
Escort officers appointed by the Canadian Government helped to smooth the war brides' passage. Their daily routine included doing the rounds of the cabins, organising baby feeding and day care, dealing with minor medical emergencies and delivering tea, sympathy and dry biscuits to seasick brides. On a rough crossing an officer could be on duty for 24 hours.



**The Big Apple**  
A number of Americans landed in Scotland, so all these Scottish girls got married and went back to New York. We had all these girls on the ship and they were so happy to see all the food they had. When we got New York we helped the mothers take the babies ashore, and the American mothers-in-laws came down to meet them.



**Della Callaghan**  
Left: Time for a game of shuffleboard. Right: Brides on the Queen Mary looking breezy towards their new lives.



Left: War brides waved goodbye to the old life as they took the train from London Waterloo to Southampton to board the Queen Mary. Right: High chairs and high tea, in the cabin class restaurant.