

Fabio Barraclough Valls writes on his early life and his involvement with the Queen Mary panel commission

(extract, amplified)

Early life

With my parents I was a refugee from Madrid (*repatriated via Valencia on the cruiser HMS Devonshire to Liverpool*), in London since July, 1936. In 1939, I went to the Ealing College of Art, Middlesex (*where Brian Wall had been as student, and to which he returned as lecturer in 1960-62*).

My brother was an engineer at the Fairey Aviation Co. in Hayes (*one reason why we had moved to Ealing, besides seeming safer from bombing*).

My father re-opened the Madrid main office of the British Chamber of Commerce as soon as the Spanish Civil War ended and my mother and I went back to join him in Madrid late 1940.

I was too young to enlist, even as a Cadet, in the Royal Navy, which had been my hope. Thus, I attended the Real Academia de Bellas Artes San Fernando in Madrid, for a while.

One sister went to Lisbon to the British Embassy.

I volunteered for the British Royal Navy, and as soon as I was accepted, I trained in 1942 in its Special Division: Naval Intelligence, serving actively from 1943 to 1946 (*in Reserve until 1956*).

RMS QUEEN MARY – Part I.

The Cunard Liner Queen Mary was commissioned in early 1930s. It plied across the Atlantic happily until the 1939 War.

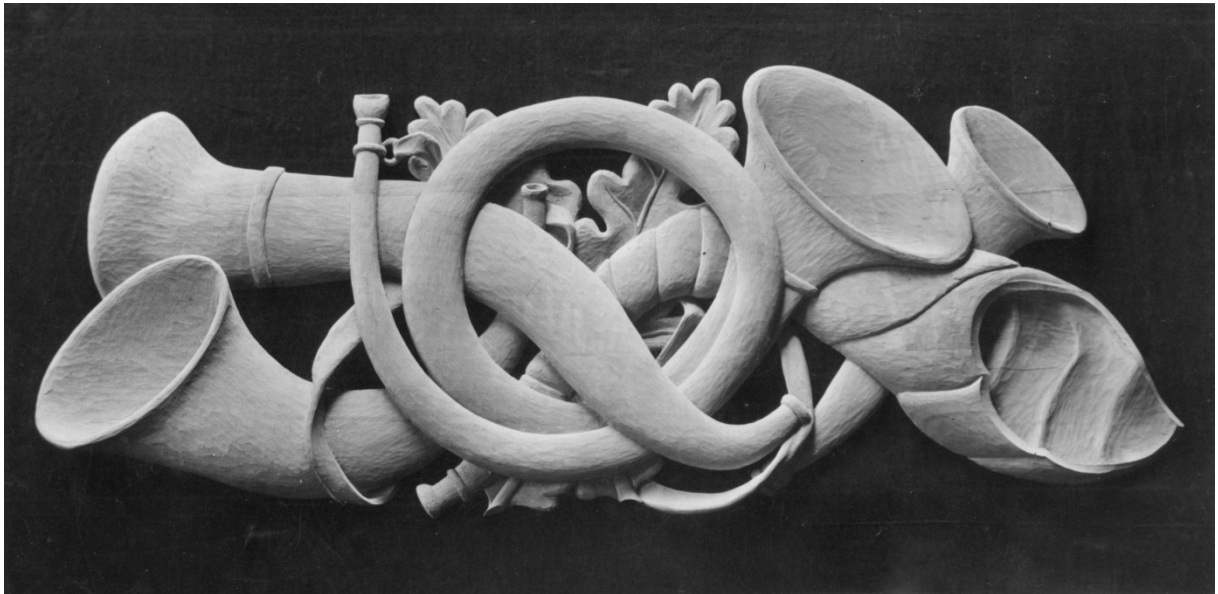
Having been requisitioned as troop carrier - surprisingly not sunk - it mostly plied to South Africa, New Zealand and Australia, bringing volunteers. Immediately after WW2 ended in the Far East in 1946, the QM went in to Southampton (*I believe*) for a total re-fit. 6 years of troop carrying had made a lot of wear and tear!

Virtually all wall decorations and sculptures of the Queen Mary were REPLACED in 1947.

RMS QUEEN ELIZABETH

South African born sculptor Edward Bainbridge COPNALL had done some carvings for the RMS Queen ELIZABETH (sister ship of QM) and these were very much liked.

From the Queen Elizabeth commissioned in 1940, there were several very nice carvings that survived the various misfortunes to the QE.



One of the panels for RMS Queen Elizabeth by Edward Bainbridge Copnall done by his own hand

RMS QUEEN MARY – part II.

Edward Bainbridge COPNALL was commissioned to do all the carvings for the 1st class lounge and restaurant of the RMS QM, at VERY short notice.

At the time I was helping him design a mother and child - he left me to do the maquette from sketches, a group we began to carve in stone, 8 ft high. Work on this was deferred when the QM commission was confirmed.

He made me Studio Manager, as he was then fulltime Principal of the Sir John Cass School of Art. Together we set up a studio in London's Clareville Grove, Kensington, SW7 (long since demolished), opposite the Chanticleer Theatre and Webber Douglas School of Dramatic Art.

Regrettably, the QM panels were done at great speed. Some, either through lack of time or other circumstances, were far from perfect.

Those panels which were considered successful and appeared in the press and in Copnall's "A Sculptor's Manual" (ISBN 0080155774) and his

autobiography "Cycles" (ISBN 1-903331-16-1), were by Edward Bainbridge Copnall and by Fabio Barraclough.



Edward Bainbridge Copnall, Joxe Alberdi, Fabio Barraclough (l.t.r.)

During eight months in 1947 work in progress at Clareville Studio was done by an average of eight woodcarvers.



Clareville Studio with some of the 12 assistants at work on the 32 panels for the Queen Mary S.S. (right bottom up: Edward Bainbridge Copnall, MBE, Fabio Barraclough)

6 panels were designed by Fabio Barraclough, 4 of which were carved personally by him, including the following two:



"Lyre with book" by Fabio Barraclough



"The orchestra" by Fabio Barraclough

It is fair to mention that many of the other assistants were learning to carve wood.

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