

Thousands turn out for Cunard Building's 100th birthday party

One of Liverpool's Three Graces celebrated a very special birthday last weekend. Saturday 2 July marked the centenary of the Cunard Building, and it proved to be a very happy birthday for the iconic venue.

Queen Elizabeth sailed up the River Mersey on Saturday morning, heralding the start of a series of events marking the centenary of the Cunard Building.

The youngest member of the fleet arrived in Liverpool at around 7am. The wind and rain – which later gave way to sunshine – failed to dampen spirits as the various celebrations took place.

A new 160ft granite bench outside of the Cunard Building was unveiled by Lord Mayor Cllr Roz Gladden, and Captain Inger Klein Thorhauge. Named 'The Journey', the specially commissioned bench, was designed by the city's BC Architects and Smiling Wolf and traces the intertwined history of Cunard Line and Liverpool over the past century and tells the story of some of the shipping giant's greatest ever liners including the Carpathia, Lusitania, the original Queen Elizabeth, the QE2 and the Lusitania

Two 'Best of British' celebratory concerts took place on the magnificent world heritage waterfront at Pier Head.

Visitors were encouraged to bring their Union Jack flags and their singing voices as they were entertained with performances from the Royal Marines Band Scotland, Liverpool Welsh Choral and opera singer Danielle Thomas. They performed classics such as Rule Britannia and Land of Hope and Glory alongside contemporary numbers such as Proud Mary and All You Need is Love. And of course, each concert featured Happy Birthday as the finale!

A special service of celebration also took place at St Nicholas Church, known locally as 'the sailors church' which was attended by David Noyes, CEO of Carnival UK and Simon Palethorpe, SVP of Cunard Line who in the evening hosted a VIP dinner on board Queen Elizabeth for specially invited guests.

Angie Redhead, Head of Cruise Operations said "The arrival of Queen Elizabeth on the Mersey was, as always, a spectacular sight and her visit was a real nod to the role Liverpool, and the Cunard Building itself, has played in Cunard's history.

"The arrival of a Cunard vessel in to the city always draws a crowd, so we wanted to make sure that we put on an event so both passengers and spectators could feel part of the celebrations. We always get a fantastic reaction to any live music, so what better than to organise a free concert which encourages a good old sing-along with a spectacular fireworks finale topping off the fun."

At the heart of the event, it was a celebration of a centenary of the Cunard Building however the city are also keen to think differently about how they use their historic venues. The weekend also saw the Cunard Building opening its doors to a brand new exhibition charting the rise and success of The Jam. With more plans in the pipeline, there is a real sense that the Cunard Building is being opening up once again for the public, and hopefully will attract a raft of new audiences who can make the most of this waterfront gem.