



Six-star luxury, but it's



MONARCH of the seas... the regal Queen Mary II in her full glory

hard work (honest!)

BY STEPHEN FOSTER AND BLAISE TAPP

TRAVELLING the seas in luxury on the world's biggest liner is most people's idea of heaven, but for two Greater Manchester engineers it is all in a day's work.

Alan Rowland and John Hatton have just returned from a trip on the Queen Mary II.

They sipped the finest champagne, dined on caviar and rubbed shoulders with the great and the good at a soiree thrown by the Commodore - and they were paid to go.

The two work for Rochdale company R and B Switchgear Services and were on board to make sure the \$400m ship remains in top condition following its introduction to the Cunard fleet earlier this year.

'Officers'

Over a fortnight they used an infrared camera to check the switchgear equipment, which helps power the 1,132ft long ship.

John said: "When we travel on a liner like the Queen Mary II we are classified as passengers and, as such, are provided with cabin accommodation."

"But we are treated like one of the ship's officers and are invited into their ward room."

"We dine in one of the ship's restaurants where you get six-star cuisine."

"I must have put on a couple of stones doing this job, but it is hard to turn the food down."

"But down below, where we work, it is

a different world. It is a very hot and noisy environment. On the Queen Mary II it can get as hot as 100 degrees Fahrenheit."

"There is enough power generated to light a whole city."

Commercial director Alan, 48, who lives in Bamford, Rochdale, has visited Tahiti, Sydney, San Francisco, Miami, Los Angeles and Tokyo, since he helped found the company nearly 20 years ago.

He said: "It sounds very glamorous, but we are not on holiday and have got a job to do."

"A lot of the time we are working under pressure."

"If something does go wrong with the switchgear they want it fixing straight away, otherwise, it could cost the liner company a lot of money and it could make headline news."

It is not all glamour jobs for the 38 staff at the company as they also service power stations, Royal Navy ships and oil rigs.



TRUBLESHOOTER... Alan with the camera used to spot danger Picture: MARK WAUGH

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