

THE QUEEN MOTHER AT LLOYD'S:

Lloyd's - that nerve-centre of marine and other insurance which is like nothing else in the world - has a new home. One of its most handsome features is the Committee Room, an Adams interior which was moved in its entirety from Bowood House, Wiltshire. But the day-to-day business of Lloyds will be done in the Main Underwriting Room, where guests are now gathering for the official opening. And it's to be a Royal opening, by the Queen Mother, who is welcomed at the door by the new Lord Mayor of London, Sir Denis Truscott. Princess Margaret is with her. Their arrival is heralded by the sounding of the famous Lutins Ball.

The Queen Mother and Princess Margaret take their places in the gallery overlooking the Main Underwriting Room - which, by the way, is 340 feet long, twice the length of the room at the old Lloyd's. The speech of welcome is given by the Chairman, Mr. Walter Barrie, Lloyd's began as a seventeenth-century coffee-house, where businessmen gathered; and the Queen Mother recalls the days when its waiters were the source of information and the bearers of messages.

"Even in 1804, I learned that when the First Lord of the Admiralty declined to receive further letters from Lloyds signed by a waiter, the committee cordially agreed and undertook that in future all communications should be transmitted through the secretary. They then very resourcefully appointed the waiter to the post of secretary!" (Laughter)

After her speech, the Queen Mother presses a button to unveil a plaque. Lloyd's has come a long way in three centuries - from a Tower Street coffee-house, to one of the keystones of the world's finance....