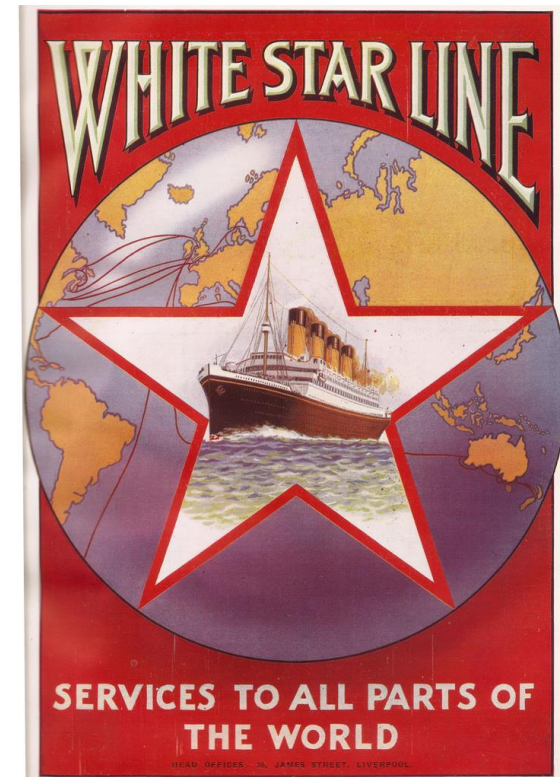




WHITE STAR LINE HQ

30 JAMES STREET, LIVERPOOL

WRITTEN BY JONATHON WILD, HISTORIAN WWW.BRAYGREEN.CO.UK



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Titanic. No other word in the 20th Century will conjure up a greater story, a greater historical occurrence, or the greatest seafaring disaster in modern times. However, The Titanic never set sail in Liverpool. This was due to bad weather on 1st April 1912. Instead, the Titanic sets sail on the 2nd, the sea trials are completed quickly, and the ship sets sail for Southampton. Titanic had strong links with her home port, Liverpool. The Ship's managing company, the White Star Line, had its office in James Street and this was the port of registry for the ship, hence the word LIVERPOOL on the stern of the ship.

White Star Line HQ has held a varied and ill-fated history during its timeline. Once the Headquarters for the White Star line, it was heavily bombed in the Blitz in World War 2 and completely burnt out. Then used as offices before becoming empty for many years.

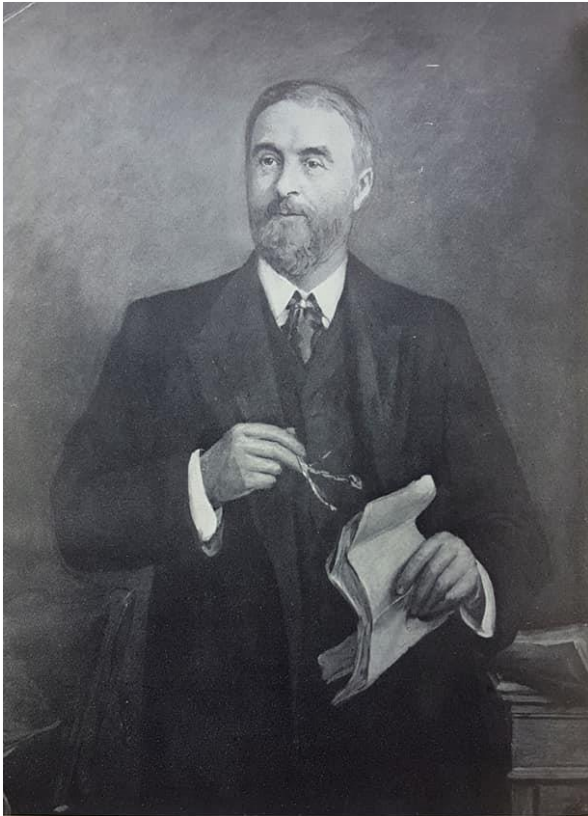
The City of Liverpool has strong roots with the shipping industry. The Oceanic Steam Navigation Company was founded in 1870 and was more commonly known as the White Star Line. The Cunard Line was founded in 1840 but commissioned the new headquarters under the Cunard Steamship Company at the Cunard Building in Liverpool. The amalgamation of Cunard and White Star Line existed between 1934-1949 after experiencing financial difficulties after the great depression.

RMS Carpathia made her maiden voyage in 1903 from Liverpool to Boston and would be the very ship that assisted in the saving of 705 survivors from the RMS Titanic.

Connections with Liverpool and the Titanic don't stop there. Captain Smith was based on Merseyside for 40 years before moving down to Southampton. The bass violinist for the ship's band lived in Tunstall Street off Smithdown Road. The great kitchens on the Titanic were made by Henry Wilson and Company. The Liverpool firm of Stonier's supplied 50,000 items of bone china to the ship. Chief Officer Wilde was from Liverpool. J Bruce Ismay was also born and bred in Liverpool who was the Chairman of the White Star Line.

James Stonehouse spoke of Liverpool in 1863 and could have been speaking of Liverpool in the 1980's, with an abandoned Albert Dock and a closed Albion House:

Could we draw aside the thick veil that hides the future from us, we might perhaps behold our great seaport swelling into a metropolis, in size and importance, its suburbs creeping out to an undreamt-of distance from its centre; or we might, reversing the picture, behold Liverpool by some unthought-of calamity—some fatal, unforeseen mischance, some concatenation of calamities—dwindled down to its former insignificance: its docks ship less, its warehouses in ruins, its streets moss-grown, and in its decay like some by-gone cities of the east, that once sent out their vessels laden with "cloth of blue, and red barbaric gold." Under which of these two fates will Liverpool find its lot some centuries hence? —which of these two pictures will it then present?



T. H. Ismay,
from the painting by Herkomer

WHITE STAR LINE

The earliest known reference to the White Star Line is from 1845 when it was founded in Liverpool by John Pilkington and Henry Wilson. Formed to focus on the UK Australia trade which greatly increased following the discovery of Gold in Australia.

On January 18th, 1868, Thomas Ismay, a Director of the National Line, purchased the White Star Line house flag, trade name and goodwill of the bankrupt company previously brought on by heavy investment in shipping which was financed by borrowing. However, the companies bank, the Royal Bank of Liverpool failed in 1867. The White Star line was forced into bankruptcy of over £500,000.

It was Ismay's desire to operate large ships on the North Atlantic service between Liverpool and New York and thus together with the White Star Line name, a building, Albion House, was designed and constructed between 1896-1898 which would be the official Headquarters for the White Star Line.

The White Star Line began its Liverpool New York run with the 'Oceanic' class of ships. 6 in total: Oceanic, Atlantic, Baltic, Republic, Celtic and Adriatic.

One of the first great losses of the White Star Line was the sinking of the SS Atlantic and the loss of 535 lives near Halifax, Nova Scotia. While en route to New York from Liverpool amidst a vicious storm, the Atlantic attempted to make port at Halifax when a concern arose that the ship would run out of coal before reaching New York. However, when attempting to enter Halifax, she ran aground on the rocks and sank in shallow waters.

White Star Line continued to invest in its shipping, with Britannic and Germanic. Two new steamers which would both end up capturing the Blue Riband record (unofficial accolade given to the passenger liner crossing the Atlantic Ocean in regular service with the highest speed).

Further expansion of the fleet was Teutonic and Majestic. Larger ships with accommodation for nearly 1,500 passengers in three classes across four decks.

In the 1890's, the White Star line moved away from building the fastest ships to cross the Atlantic, they focused on the more luxurious fleet. The first step in this was with Cymric. This had been planned with both Passengers and Livestock areas, but after Director consultation, it was deemed that the 'Cattle' areas would be turned in to the Third-Class accommodation!

With the building timeframe of White Star Line HQ, Oceanic was also being constructed in 1897. However, Thomas Ismay's health was not good and started to decline. His health steadied enough for him to visit Oceanic upon her completion in Belfast and the Belfast officials awarded him with a Key to the City.

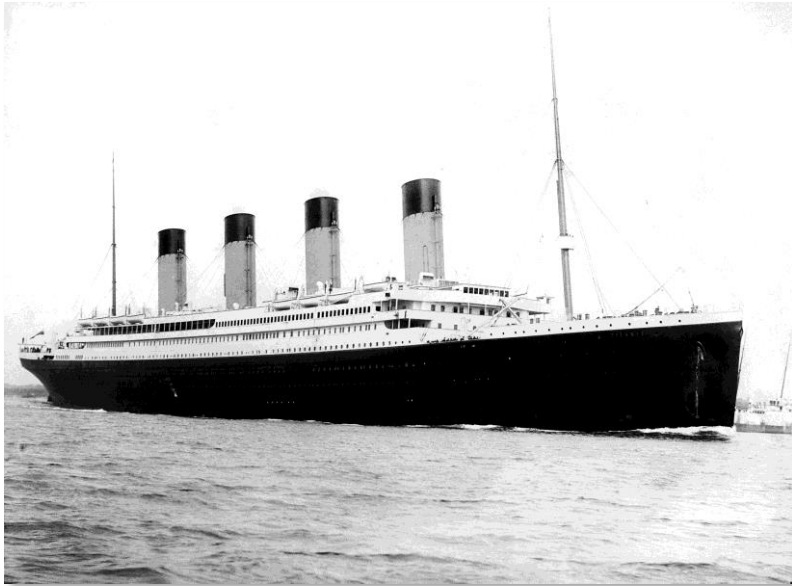


Sadly, Thomas Ismay passed away in November 1899 just months after the completion of WSL HQ. In the immediate aftermath, control of the company was passed to his son, J Bruce Ismay. In 1901, The White Star Line ordered a set of 4 new ships naming these 'the big four'. The Celtic, Cedric, Baltic, Adriatic. The last of these ships were scrapped in 1935. The biggest competitor to the White Star Line was the Cunard Line. To enhance their reputation, White Star Ordered the Olympic class Liners: Olympic, Titanic and Britannic. These would be the biggest and most luxurious ships in the world!

With the Olympic Class ocean Liners, Olympic, Titanic and Britannic, the Olympic was the only profitable liner for the company. Titanic sank on its maiden voyage, and Britannic was requisitioned by the government and used as a hospital ship during World War 1.

During the scrapping of the Olympic in 1937, parts were auctioned off. As this was a near identical version of The Titanic, (slight differences were that of enclosed promenade decking, and slight reworking on the starboard side for a new Restaurant), the fittings of the first-class lounge can still be seen to this very day in The White Swan Hotel in Northumberland.





The Titanic

R.M.S Titanic was constructed and built in Belfast with the keel laid down for the Titanic in March 1909. The ship took 26 months to build. Titanic was 882 feet 9 inches long. A Maximum breadth of 92ft 6 inches, and her total height measured 104ft. It had 10 decks (from top to bottom): The Boat Deck, Promenade Deck, Bridge Deck, Shelter Deck, Saloon Deck, Upper Deck, Middle Deck, Lower Deck, Orlop Deck, and the Tank Top were the lowest level of the ship. The total number of passengers were 2,453. 833 First Class Passengers, 614 in second class, and 1,006 in third class accommodation. Full capacity for both crew and passengers were 3,547.

Titanic was launched at 12:15pm on 31st May 1911 in the presence of Lord Pirrie, J Pierpoint Morgan and J Bruce Ismay.

During its maiden voyage, Titanic struck an iceberg just after 11:40pm on the 14th April 1912 and sinks at 2:20am on the 15th April 1912. 710 people survived the disaster after being rescued by the RMS Carpathia.

Aftermath

In 1927, the White Star Line was purchased by the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company. However, in 1932, RMSPC ran in to financial trouble and was liquidated. A new company, Royal Mail Lines Limited took over the ships of RMSPC and their lines including White Star Line.

However, in 1933 both White Star Line and their opposition, Cunard were both in serious financial difficulty. Falling passengers from the Great Depression, the Government stepped in to aid both companies if they agreed to merge their operations. The agreement was completed on 30th December 1933.

This created Cunard-White Star Line. In 1947, Cunard acquired the 38% of Cunard-White Star they did not already own and in 1949, acquired White Star's assets and renamed the company Cunard. The White Star line was to be no more 'in name' yet the White Star Line's Officers still exist in James Street, Liverpool.

The White Star flag is raised on all Cunard ships and on the Nomadic in Belfast, Northern Ireland every 15th April in memory of the Titanic disaster.



WHITE STAR LINE HQ

Albion House, 30 James Street, White Star Line building, Pacific Steam Navigation Company – these are all names that people associate with 30 James Street. However, 30 James Street is its official name, with the above names being associated with the building at different times of its tenure.

30 James Street was constructed between 1896 and 1898. Designed by Architects Richard Norman Shaw and J Francis Doyle, it was built for the Ismay Imrie and Company shipping company, which later became the White Star Line. Its design follows closely to that of the Architects earlier work of 1887, the former New Scotland Yard building in London. The building has been described by Historic England as: *(copyright Historic England)*

A symmetrical design. 6 storeys of varying heights and attics, 5 bays to James Street and 3 bays to The Strand. Basement and ground floor of ashlar with rusticated dressings, the upper storeys brick banded with stone. Round-arched, concave entrance with keystone and rusticated columns, broken pediment with window and iron balcony in tympanum.

Windows below the brickwork are sashed with glazing bars, those above are mostly casements. 2nd floor windows have iron balconies and moulded architraves with triple keystones and cornices. 2 floors above with paired windows. Angle turret, and 2 turrets and gable on Strand facade. Corner turrets with cupola and finials to The Strand flanking large triangular gable (rebuilt after war damage). Large banded stacks. Recessed porch behind cast iron gates continues the rustication and has coffered ceiling. A dramatic and influential essay in Shaw's polychromatic manner.

After news broke on the sinking of the Titanic, crew members' families from Scotland Road came down to the building for further information. The sad news was shouted to them from the balcony above the entrance by White Star Line staff, too afraid to confront them personally. During the Blitz of Liverpool in May 1941, Albion House was struck by incendiary bombs, and was burnt out. So much so that it was little more than a shell at the end of the Blitz. Only the two lower floors survived underground 'intact.' The rest of the building was gutted including the roof, the turret domes – but the clock survived the war!

The building, still owned by the Pacific Navigation Steam Company after the blitz, was restored 'on the cheap.' This was done to get the building back in use as quickly as possible. There are many subtle differences to the building pre and post the blitz. These are:

- *The roofline structure is different to that of the original design.*
- *The metal topped domes either side of each turret are higher than the original designs.*
- *The complete front gable end has been removed and replaced with a far more simplistic design.*
- *The external clock has been removed and considered destroyed.*
- *The doors at either side of the turrets to walk on to the front balcony were bricked up to just window height.*

A further description of Albion House is noted as:

30 James Street has a rectangular footprint and stands three bays wide on The Strand and five bays wide on James Street. The building comprises a steel-frame clad in stone and brick. It extends over six main storeys with a further two storeys in the attic space. The lower two storeys and basement are faced in large masonry stonework, while those above are faced in horizontal bands of pink brick and Portland stone. The basement has rounded-arched windows with rusticated 'voussoirs' and key stones on The Strand frontage; a single rounded-arched doorway on James Street at the corner with The Strand; and square-headed windows on James Street in pairs, framed with rusticated stonework.

The piano nobile (main) ground floor above the basement has large wooden sash windows, which are glazed with small rectangular panes set between slender glazing bars. The windows have rusticated triple-keystones set beneath a moulded entablature. The outer most bay along James Street, away from The Strand, has a large doorway set beneath a dramatically rusticated arch, with ornate ironwork gates.

Above, the windows to the first storey are shorter with plain stonework lintels. The second floor has tall, rectangular windows each with Juliet balconies, set between single pilasters, with triple-keystones and a moulded cornice. The third and fourth floors have shorter rectangular windows, although the five bays along James Street have narrow windows set in pairs. Emerging from each corner of The Strand facade from the second floor upwards are two corner turrets, with irregular spaced mullioned windows. Each turret is topped with a lead-clad cupola domed roof, surmounted with an onion-shaped finial.

The fifth-floor windows have a continuous balcony with ironwork balustrade supported by stone corbels, set beneath a large triangular gable end on The Strand frontage. Originally the gable end featured a projected mullioned window topped with a stonework lantern, with rusticated circular opening. Sadly, the building suffered damage during the Second World War, and when rebuilt the gable end was reinstated in a much plainer form, with a simpler mullioned window at the apex of the gable.

The slate-clad roof of the building is tiered, with rectangular dormer windows. Again, the dormer windows were rebuilt in simpler form following the bomb damage. The roof is pierced by tall chimney stacks, which repeat the brick and stonework banding of the upper storeys of the building.

THE WHITE STAR LINE OFFICES – LIVERPOOL

The following description is taken just after the opening of the building in 1898:

“A slice of New Scotland Yard” is the common criticism on the White Star offices. Like most common criticisms, it is partly true and partly false. There is, undoubtedly, a certain similarity between the two buildings; the same materials are used; the scale is the same; there are the same angle turrets; and there is somewhat similar treatment of the apex of the gable. But there are enough points of difference to entitle the Liverpool building to be regarded as a fresh and original design.

The first point that strikes one externally, apart from the materials used, is its absolute simplicity. There is little or no carving, no ornamental. It is essentially an architectural composition, the result of a skilful use of material and a clever scheme of fenestration. As regards to the latter, it may be urged that the windows of the ground floor are too large, and that consequently a weak appearance is given to the lower part of the building. If these windows had been fitted with plate-glass then there is no doubt that this would have resulted; but broken up as they are by small panes and good big sash-bars, this defect is avoided.

It is true that these windows have a fault, and that is, that no 'camber' has been given to the flat granite arch over each. Partly owing to this, and partly to the heavy keystones, the arches appear to 'sag.' It is possible that in one or two there is slight settlement, but it is more likely that the somewhat unpleasant appearance is due to that optical illusion which the Greeks were so careful to correct in their best examples.

Some of these windows have also been spoilt by mahogany sun-blind cases. These, no doubt; were not originally contemplated, but the architects are none the less responsible, as it should have been patent from the first that they would be required. It is astonishing how few architects arrange in their designs for this small practical necessity, and how often the proportions and appearance of the windows of a building are spoilt by the want of a little forethought. The lower portion of the building is granite, the upper part, small Ruabon bricks and Portland stone arranged in irregular courses, and the roofs are covered with green slate.

The bond for the brickwork is that universally used in Liverpool, one row of headers to three of stretchers. A broad band of stone marks the transition between the lower part of the building and the upper, and on this band are the stone balconies to the large windows of the first floor. This is a distinctive improvement on New Scotland Yard, where the brick, starting from granite, makes a hard line.

We well remember Mr Norman Shaw's remark when he showed the Architectural Association over that building, when it was repeated to him that someone had suggested a strong cornice or balcony was required all round to separate the materials: 'And they want a balcony, do they. Dear Me!'

Here this series of little balconies, one to each window, with their charming, curved fronts of wrought iron work, form one of the most pleasant features of the building and prevent the appearance of flatness which otherwise would have been problematic. Above them there is a continuous, or almost continuous, balcony carried by simple but very effective stone corbels.

Although one hesitates to say that this is an improvement on the moulded cornice which occupies a similar position in New Scotland Yard, it is undoubtedly a more suitable arrangement for a building designed and used for city offices. The projecting eaves above this balcony are certainly much more effective than in the other design where there is little or no projection, and the effect, consequently, has always appeared mean.

The clock is carried on an iron cantilever which has been cased in oak. It looked better, we think, before it was cased. We were hoping that Mr Shaw would have the courage to let the skeleton stand and decorate it with colour and gilding only. It went very well with the plain railing of the upper balcony and did not look out of place beside the ornamental ironwork below. It is true that is a pretty enough feature as it stands, although the octagonal oak case to the clock itself is not very happy; but it has the interest which a more unusual treatment would have given it.

As regards to the internal planning of the building little need to be said; except at the entrance there is practically none. The private offices are at the front, or west end, and are divided from the rest of the building by a transverse wall, with chimney breasts back-to-back. The central portion has been fitted up differently on each floor, wooden screens in most cases separating the central passage from the offices on either side. The way in which the two huge chimney stacks are carried is characterised by the boldness which so often distinguishes Mr Shaw's treatment of these necessary features.

The flues that compose the stack in the centre only start from the mezzanine floor, the double chimney breasts on each side being carried on iron girders and stanchions. On the fifth floor from the mezzanine the flues for both these chimneys are carried over on arches formed of riveted girders of segmental shape. On these rest the two big stacks, but as a

narrow passage down the centre had to be provided on the top floor, each stack is still divided into two until it passes through the roof. The two smaller stacks of the eastern gable contain the boiler and ventilating flues from the basement, and the fireplace flues from the offices above the vestibule.

It is difficult to understand, however, what flues are in the northern stack, as there are no rooms on this side of the building. Anyhow, on this east wall these chimney-breasts project from its face and run up in straight lines to the tops of the chimneys. There are no setoffs; neither is there any batter, and the effect, therefore, as seen coming down the street from the back, is decidedly top-heavy and clumsy.

In a building on a smaller scale no refinements to correct optical illusions would be necessary; but here, where everything is so large, they are undoubtedly needed. But this is, of course, a detail. The building is a fine piece of work, and if minor deficiencies are mentioned it is only because there is so little to find fault with. It rises higher than the water tower of the railway station behind it and makes everything round it look little and mean. This is not because of its size, for a building may be large, and yet ineffective, but because of the fine sense of scale which pervades it. It is a landmark from the river, and from the high ground at the back, on which most of the town is built. It teaches us how blocks of city offices should be designed and affords a lesson not only to the architects of Liverpool but also to their brethren in London and other large towns.

As regards the general arrangement of the building; Below the ground-floor, which is raised twelve steps, there are two basements. The lower contains the heating apparatus, coal cellars and is used for, we understand, for storing passengers' luggage. The upper basement and the ground floor are used by the White Star Line for their offices. The latrines are on the top floor but one, and the rest of this floor and the one over being used for caretaker's rooms.

It is possible to get out on to the open balcony in the apex of the western gable, and from it there is a glorious view of river and sea, of Cheshire and the Welsh hills in the background.

The interior of the White Star offices on the ground-floor is chiefly interesting from the frank way in which the construction is shown. The panelled fireproof ceiling, specially designed by the architects and made by J. C Edwards, of Ruabon, looks remarkably well; the uprights and girders would look equally well if they were not painted so detestable a colour.

A cold French grey is not decoration, and it is hoped that this will be altered. The curved counter fronts of polished Hopton-wood stone, with a dark marble base, are very satisfactory. There is a great deal that is nice about many of the fittings inside the building. On the ground-floor the entrance screens and doors covered with leather and studded with brass-headed nails are very effective; but the copper balusters in front of the framework of the screens are already black.

We have before referred the planning of the entrance. All this portion is very dignified. A flight of twelve wide granite steps in the entrance vestibule, which is lined with granite ashlar, leads to the entrance-hall with its pavements of marble and stone and its walls and arches of polished granite. The two lifts open out of this, the wall in front of and above them being kept flush and carried right across, so that the whole of the east side is granite except where the doors of the lifts come. Beyond the entrance-hall is the staircase-hall approached by four more steps. The staircase has a red marble dado with green marble capping.

On many of the floors this cuts unpleasantly across windows, and is difficult to understand why this should be, unless the dado were an afterthought, as there is no reason whatsoever why the windows on this north front, which is unimportant and can never be seen, should not have been differently arranged. The staircase balusters are of suitably designed cast-iron with oak handrail and are painted the same objectionable French grey as the girders in the office. One of the most effective features in the interior is the large octagonal well opening over the entrance-hall, which, starting from the first floor, pierces the five floors above, giving light to the halls at the different levels. This well is, in each case, surrounded by a balustrade similar in design to that of the staircase.

There are arches on each floor like those on the ground floor, the only difference being that the upper arches are not in plaster and not granite. One little practical point may be mentioned which is not often found in England, although we believe, it is practically universal in the tall office blocks in America. On each floor there is a letter box with a chute which leads to the main box in the entrance hall on the ground floor.

We have heard objections raised to this arrangement, but in this building, we believe it works well. A word of praise may be given to the paving's in the different halls. The entrance hall has already been mentioned. The floor of the Mezzanine has a narrow band of dark green marble, enclosing a centre of Portland stone with dark green marble in small diamonds. On the other floors the diamonds are omitted, but the band is retained, and the result is extremely simple but very effective paving. The bands also serve to separate the Portland stone from the York stone of the landing and stairs.

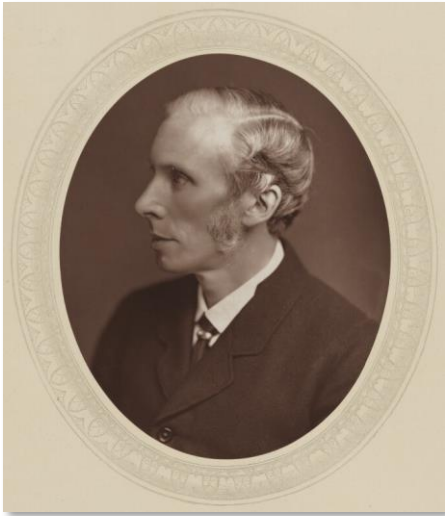
It is difficult to over-estimate the good such a building as this must do in a town. That it is not universally admired is a tribute to its boldness and originality, and proof that it is a real work of architecture. When prominent Members of Parliament regard New Scotland Yard as deplorably bad, it is not to be wondered at that some of the poor general public cannot see the beauty of the White Star Offices. They must be educated, that is all that can be said; and it is by these, buildings and some others that their education must be affected.

Designed on fresh lines, there is a difference between fresh and new – the White Star offices teach a lesson – to architects and others alike – of careful thought and ability conception; of suitability and honest building; and lastly, of what has been insisted upon before in this article, of the grand effects which can be produced by simple building, without the use of meaningless carving.

The building reminds one of the Italian palaces of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, although in many respects, it is quite different from them. There is the same bigness and yet the same delicacy that you find in the Farnese and Strozzi. There is the same happy use of the mezzanine which is seen in so many other Italian examples. There is the same simplicity and absence of ornamentation. The iron balconies do for the White Star offices what the bronze torch-holders and rings do for the Strozzi. The building is, as the others were in their day, especially modern. They were palaces for Princes; this is a block of offices for merchants, but built in the princely style, by one who was biggest of all the merchant princes on the banks of the Mersey – the late Mr J H Ismay.

With Norman Shaw in this building was associated Mr Frances Doyle, who superintended the carrying out of the work. This was no easy task. The natural foundations were by no means everything which could be desired; the floor of the bottom basement is, we believe, well below high water mark, and great difficulties were, we know, experienced at the south-west corner. It is no joke either to carry on iron girders two double chimney-breasts, each six stories high, with a heavy chimney stack on top. These are merely some of the difficulties with which the architects must have been confronted.

Mr Doyle, it will be remembered, collaborated with Mr Norman Shaw over the late Mr Ismay's private house, Dawpool. It must have been a great satisfaction to Mr Ismay, who for many years took such a keen interest in our art, to know that he had built the two finest examples of modern architecture in or near Liverpool.



RICHARD NORMAN SHAW

White Star Line HQ was designed by architects Richard Norman Shaw and J. Francis Doyle. Richard Norman Shaw was born on the 7th May 1831 in Edinburgh. He is one of the greatest of British Architects and his style was at his strongest in the 1890's.

Born in Edinburgh and later trained under William Burn and George Edmond Street. (Street's most recognisable building is the Law Courts in London). He partnered with William Eden Nesfield and worked on further architectural designs. Further to this, Shaw also worked with John Callcott Horsley, and George Henry Boughton. Later, in his career, he moved to a much heavier classical style which influenced the emerging Edwardian Classicism. He designed Ismay's mansion 'Dawpool' on the Wirral, as seen below.

Richard Norman Shaw is known for designing 30 James Street, but this was to be a design from other buildings that took place before and after the building of 30 James Street. He designed the North Building of Norman Shaw Buildings (Formerly known as New Scotland Yard) in 1887 and opened in 1890. Further to this, he designed the South Building, which was originally called Scotland House, from 1902 to 1906.



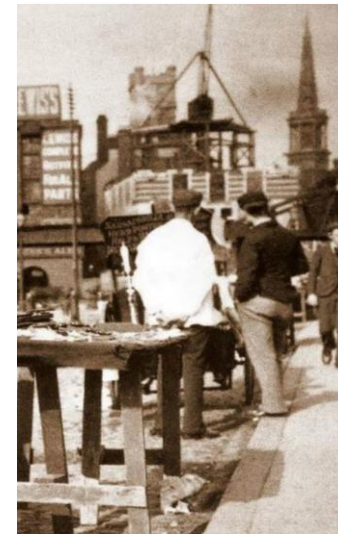


Taken from Mann Island, this shows the view of the warehouses in 1890 on the plot of 30 James Street (Centre).

Behind the warehouses, the Water Tower of James Street station rises behind them. Also note St George's Church, Derby Square on the right, on the site of Liverpool Castle.

At this point, White Star Line was operating from 10 Water Street. After seeing Shaw's work on Dawpool, he wanted to create a grand Headquarters and would look no further than Shaw's impressive Norman Shaw Buildings in London.

Quite why the particular piece of land that the warehouse stood was wanted by Ismay is still a mystery. Perhaps the land was cheap there or perhaps the warehouses was due to be demolished? Below we see work start in 1896.





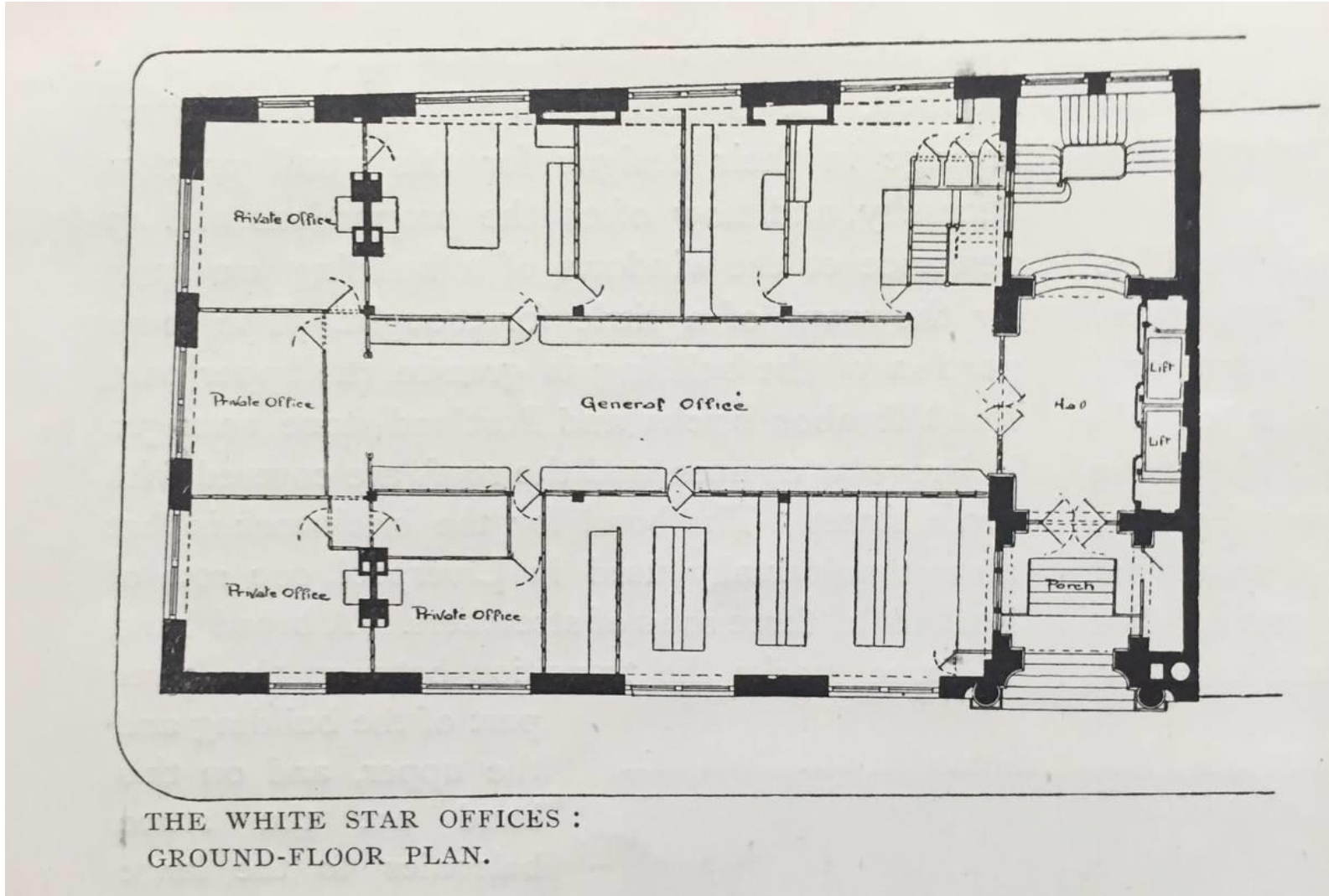
The earliest known drawing of the completed HQ taken from The Builder, 1897.

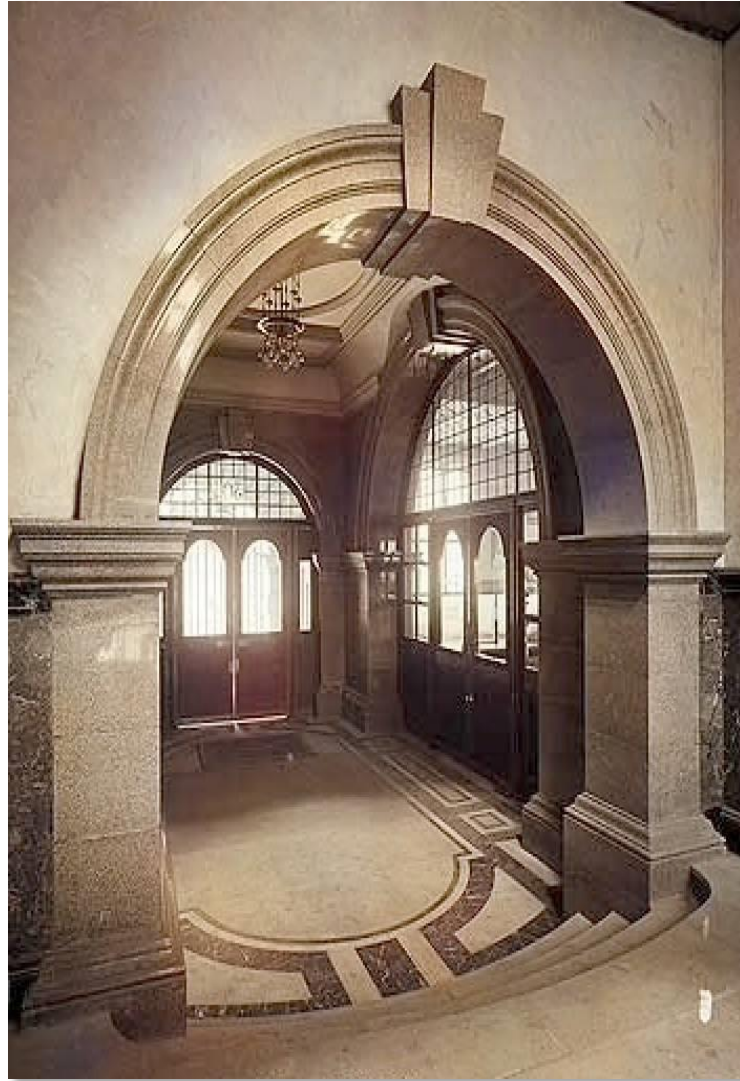


The 1898 view of the completed building taken from Mann Island.

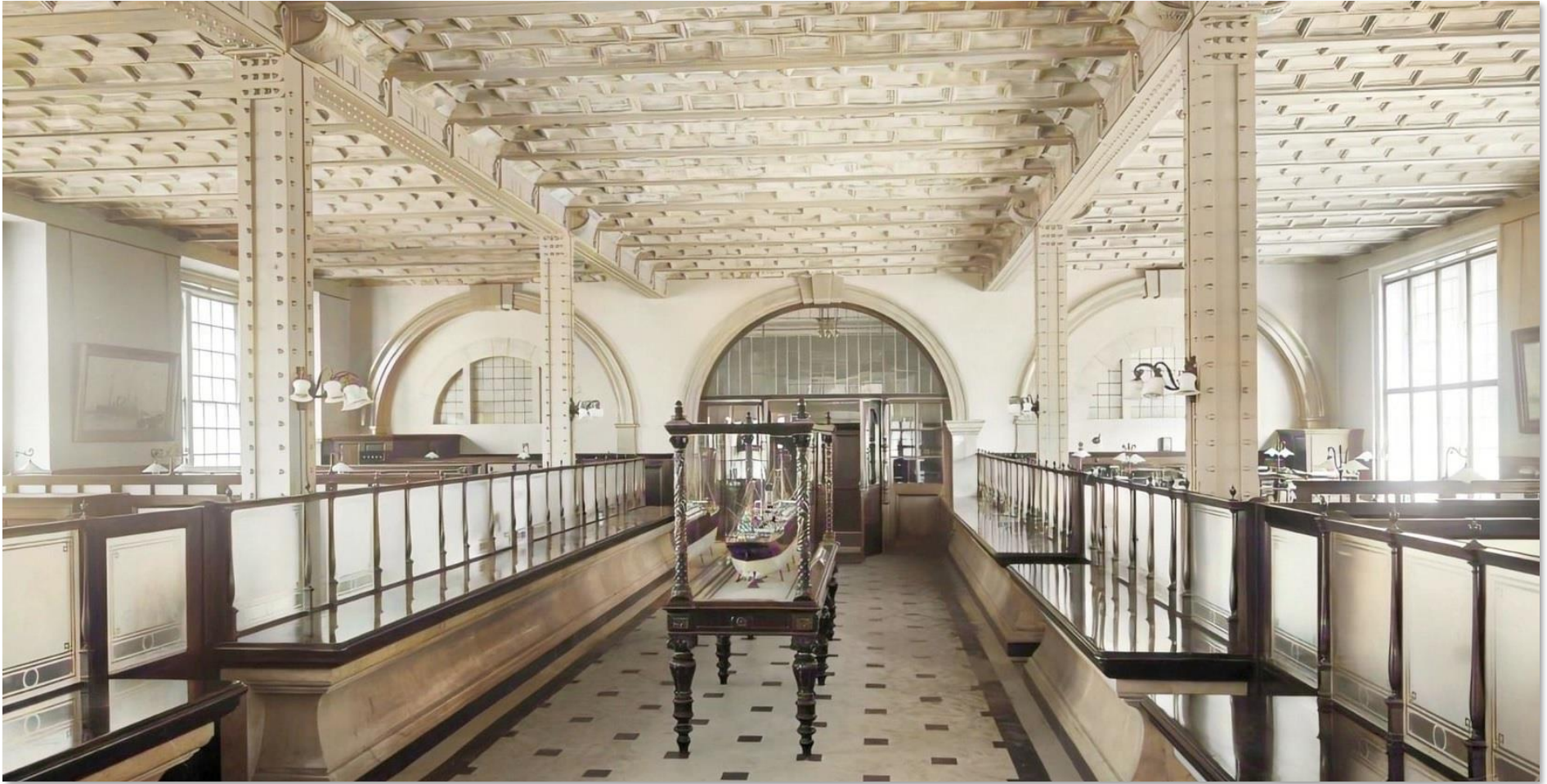


30 James Street, 1924





The original interior foyer from 1897. Note that there is no South American Mosaic set into the floor at this time.

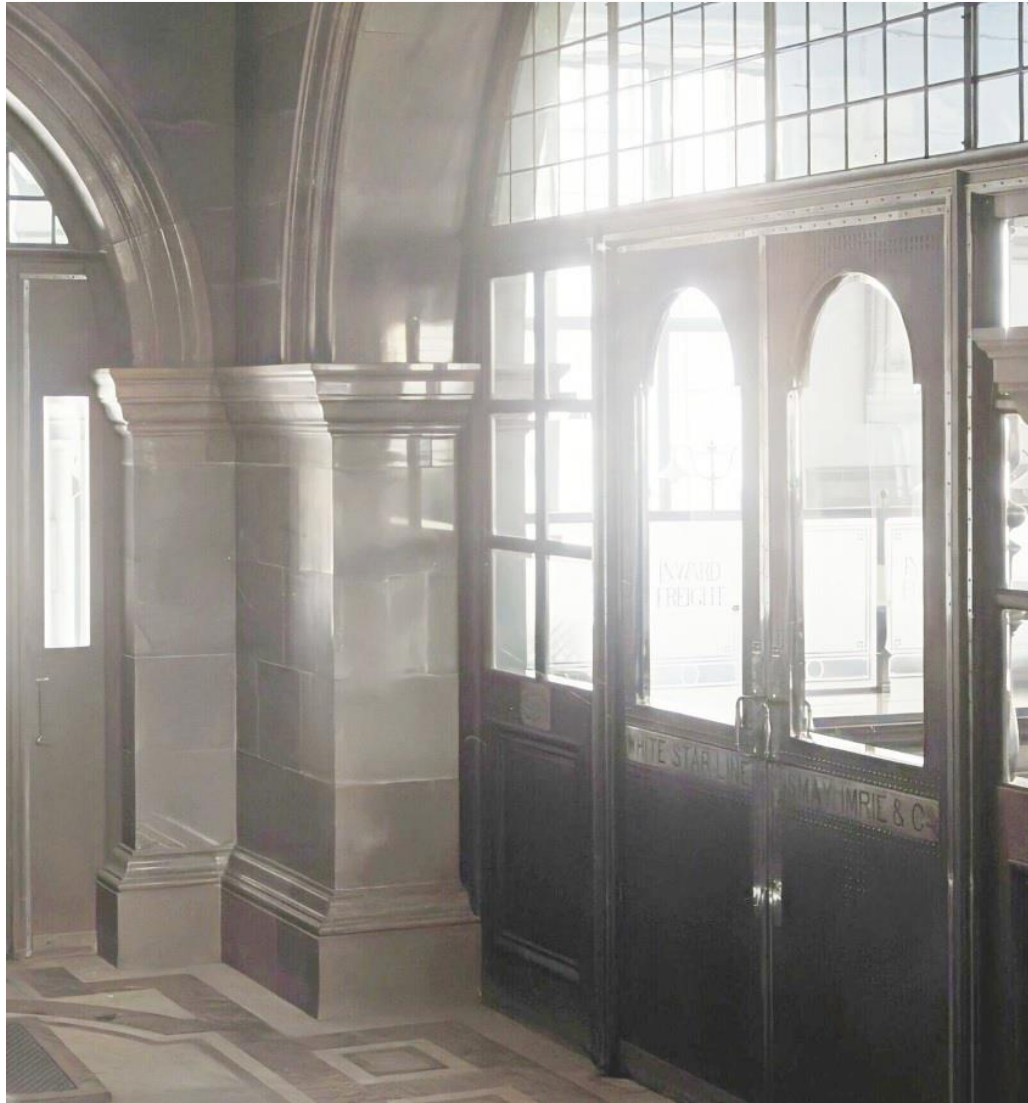


A view of the Grand Hall showing the full length of the 1st Class Passenger and Ticket Office.









The original entrance to the 1st class booking office – White Star Line – Ismay, Imrie & Co.

30 JAMES STREET – THE WAR YEARS

The Liverpool Blitz was the heavy and sustained bombing of the English city of Liverpool and its surrounding area, during the Second World War by the German Luftwaffe.

Liverpool was the most heavily bombed area of the country, outside London, due to the city having, along with Birkenhead, the largest port on the west coast and being of significant importance to the British war effort. Descriptions of damage were kept vague to hide information from the Germans and downplayed in the newspapers for propaganda purposes. Around 4,000 people were killed in the Merseyside area during the Blitz. This death toll was second only to London, which suffered over 40,000 by the end of the war.

Liverpool, Bootle and the Wallasey Pool complex were strategically very important locations during the Second World War. The Port of Liverpool had for many years been the United Kingdom's main link with North America and proved to be a key part in the British participation in the Battle of the Atlantic. As well as providing anchorage for naval ships from many nations, the port's quays and dockers handled over 90 per cent of all the war materiel brought into Britain from abroad with some 75 million tons passing through its 11 miles (18 km) of quays. Liverpool was the eastern end of a Transatlantic chain of supplies from North America. Other industries were also heavily concentrated in Liverpool and across the Mersey in Birkenhead.

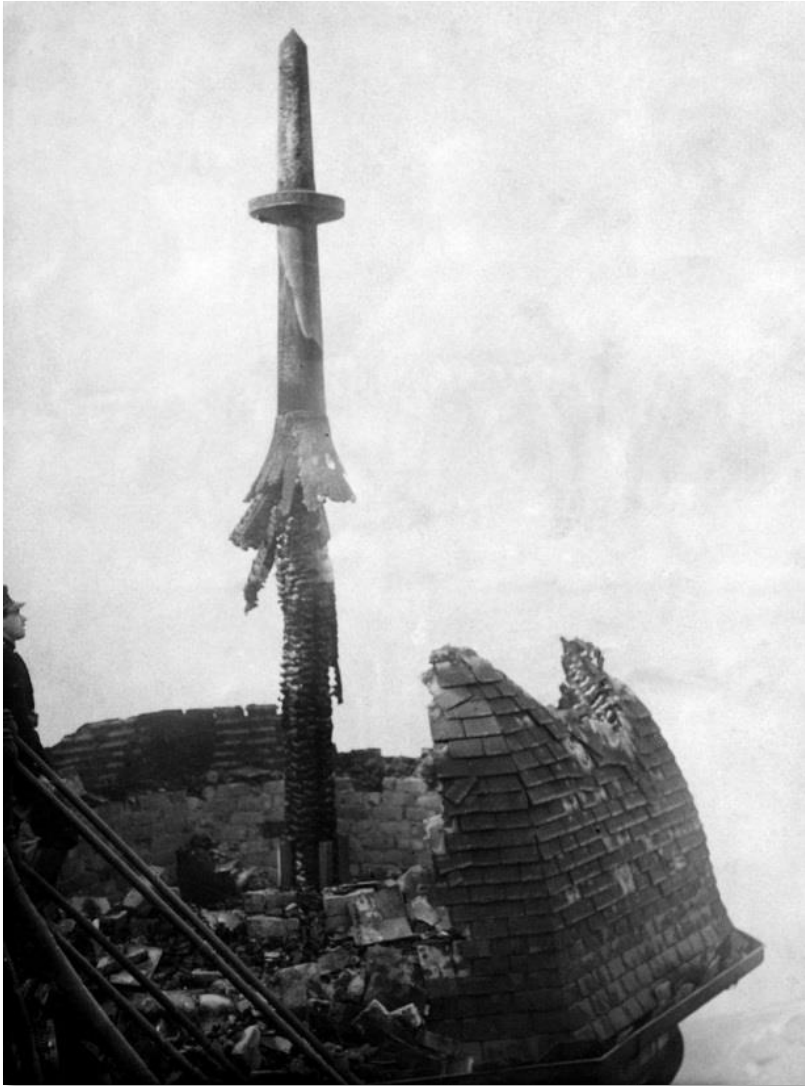
May 1941 saw a renewal of the air assault on the region; a seven-night bombardment that devastated the city. The first bomb landed upon Seacombe, Wallasey, Wirral, at 22:15 on 1 May. The peak of the bombing occurred from 1–7 May 1941. It involved 681 Luftwaffe bombers; 2,315 high explosive bombs and 119 other explosives such as incendiaries were dropped. The raids put 69 out of 144 cargo berths out of action and inflicted 2,895 casualties.

The May Blitz - 2nd May 1941 - The bombers return in force with wave after wave hitting the area in a prolonged attack. Liverpool city centre is the main target and suffers terrible damage. The Dock Board building, Saint Michael's Church in Chinatown, the old White Star building, Liverpool Corn exchange, are hit this night.

The Roads of Balliol, Knowsley and Bedford in the Bootle area are hit hard destroying many houses and buildings.

The White Star Line building sadly becomes a roofless shell. All windows and doors are blown out. However, the ground floor, basement and sub-basement do not suffer as much damage as the ceiling of the Grand Hall is fireproof. Further to this, the most serious destruction was to the gable end, which was removed after the war and rebuilt to a much simpler design.

When one stands outside 30 James Street, it is still possible to make out the slight changes in the brickwork showing the new upper walls and gable end.



The bombed remains of 30 James Street showing the turret top to the left. Above shows the sagging of the roof beams high up in the attic space of the building. Please note these images are copyright Historic England.





Viewing the rear of 30 James Street – a burnt out shell.



Viewing the side of 30 James Street – a burnt out shell. Taken from Sea Brow.



30 JAMES STREET – POST WAR

Although we are not concentrating on the history of the White Star Line itself in this document, it is, however, important to provide some details on the post war era on 30 James Street.

In 1933, White Star Line was in serious financial difficulties brought on by the great depression. Less were travelling and some of their fleet had become aged. By this time, the WSL had vacated 30 James Street and by 1934, Pacific Steam Navigation Company had moved in. They wanted to put their own stamp on the building and did so in two ways. Firstly, (pre-war), they installed the mosaic that can be seen in the vestibule. Many people believed that this was installed when the building was 'as new,' but PSNC installed this upon their ownership. The mosaic is of South America, and this was added because the PSNC served many ports in this location. It is testament to the installation of this mosaic that it has stood the test of time, not just through the war years but also the footfall from the office workers.



Secondly, as shown below, the PSNC installed large letters attached to the balcony of 30 James Street to show their ownership of the building.

When the building was hit in the May blitz, little remained. One of the more serious structural faults with the building was that the front gable wall had no support from the now missing roof section. It was noted that this was almost 'moving' in the wind, and something had to be done. Therefore, and with regret, one of the most ornate parts of the building would soon be removed. So bad was the front wall, that the entire gable end was removed. Not only this but also the complete tops of the turrets as well as some of the front wall on level 6 (The Presidential suite).

Work commenced slowly on the building after the war. Without the direction of the previous architects, there were many areas of the building that were refurbished at a lesser quality than previously seen. The front gable end was restored but to a far less pleasing view than the original structure. The turret domes were changed to a different style. Internally, long gone were the wooden panelling effects and the part leather trimmed doors bearing the White Star Line signage. One of the greatest changes was to the roof structure. A far more simplistic model was sadly used.

Sadly, the clock was to be no more. As seen above, the clock was little more than an iron band after the blitz and was removed and scrapped during the refurbishment. Internally, the staircase was rebuilt, and the balustrade was added, again to a far simpler design than previous.

This was done for two reasons. One was that there was little money after the war, two, that the PSNC wanted to have this building repaired and 'up and running' as quickly as possible, so it made little sense



The Pacific Steam Navigation Company



Taken from Mann Island showing the Overhead Railway.



When the Pacific Steam Navigation Company left the building, it was used for many smaller companies until it became derelict in the 1980's. Thousands of people passed by this building and yet no one was allowed in or could see past the iron gates at the front. The gates were locked, and it became a bit of a mystery on what it was lying abandoned. The last interior images before any conversion took place are shown below. These items are copyrighted to Historic England.























Before the restoration took place back at the start of 2014, the first images taken since the 1980's were taken and showed the poor condition of the interior. The building was on the verge of being added to the 'At Risk Register' by Historic England and it was fortunate that someone was willing to take the property on. We start with the sub-basement area.







The Grand Hall.



















The Caretakers Flat – now Carpathia





The Caretakers Flat – now Carpathia

I think the final point on the building in the sense of the history is that while there were different levels of 'class' on the ships, this also took place at 30 James Street. If you were booking as a first-class passenger, you were allowed in via the main steps and into the grand hall. For those who were booking second class and steerage, you had to go in via the side entrance and be dealt with in the second class and steerage office which was in the sub-basement.





A then and now of Mann Island.

PRESENT IMAGES OF 30 JAMES STREET

Entrance Vestibule



Strike on the plate – not on the granite (for knocking your pipe out)



The entrance to 30 James Street





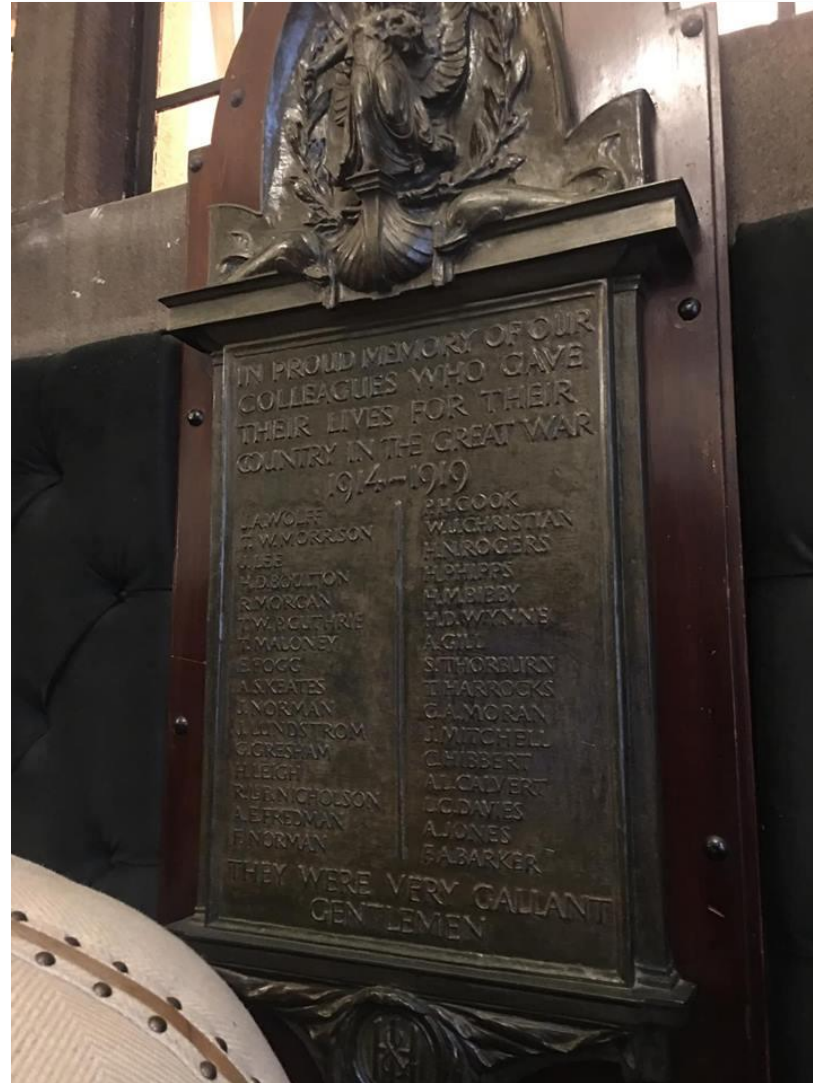
The South American mosaic installed in 1934 under ownership of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company



On the left is the original post chute to deliver letters from upper floors to the ground floor.



Originally (as seen above), there were doors here as this area was part of the 1st class booking office.



The World War 1 memorial plaque.



The World War 2 memorial plaque.







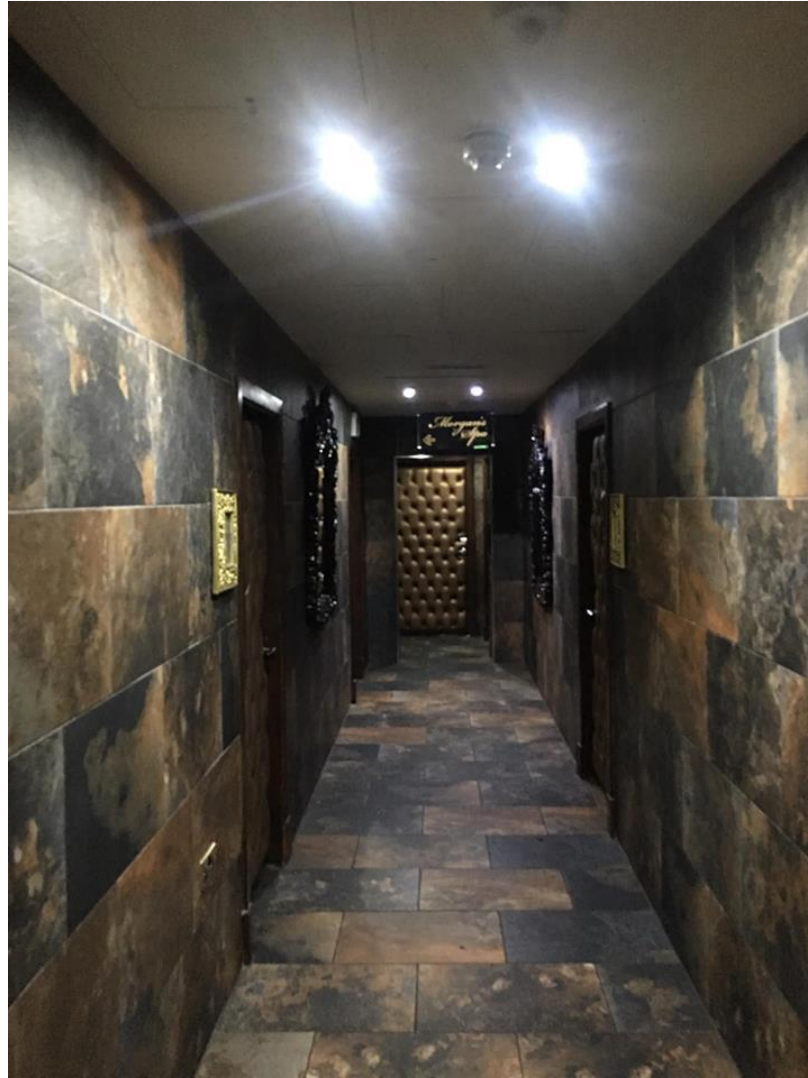
The Grand Hall looking towards the front of the building.



The Grand Hall.



Steps leading to the basement level.



The basement corridor.



The basement front windows looking towards Mann Island.





Morgan's Vault – looking towards the original strong room door.



Looking out of the strong room into Morgan's Vault.



Inside the strong room – with an added spiral staircase for access to the sub-basement.



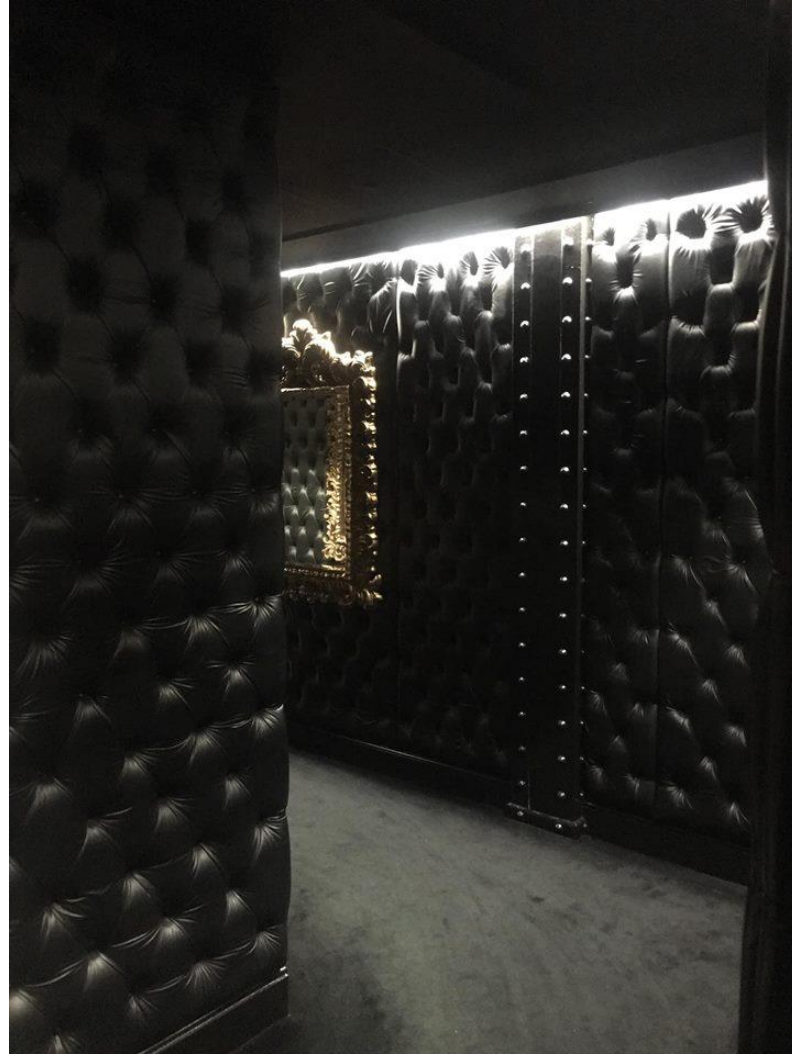
Morgan's Spa in the sub-basement.



Morgan's Spa in the sub-basement.



Seating in the stairwell for a well-earned rest.



The first and second floor corridors mirroring the base of a ship.



Lighter decoration in the higher floors.



Looking down from the top of the staircase.



Balcony views across to Mann Island.



Balcony views from the 'flagpole' room towards the Albert Dock.



A view of the front balcony that runs across the building. There were originally doors to gain access to this level.



One of the Turret Rooms.



In the Presidential Suite.



In the Presidential Suite.



In the Presidential Suite. This was one half of the original water tank in the roof space, now the Presidential Suite bath.



The original caretakers' steps from level 6 to level 7 before the lifts were installed in this floor.



The Carpathia Restaurant.



The Carpathia Restaurant.



Views from the balcony.



Views from the balcony.



Views from the balcony.

