TITANIC and OLYMPIC

some documentary highlights

held in the Marine Technology Special Collection, Newcastle University.

Our Collection has some original company documents, some of which are unique, in addition to publications which describe the building, launching, operation, and scrapping of these two famous passenger liners. Our Collection is open to visitors by appointment where these materials can be consulted.

Over a century after White Star's flagship TITANIC was lost in 1912, she and her sister OLYMPIC continue to exert a fascination. The Collection has a number of items related to these ships, including information on OLYMPIC’s demolition in 1935:-

2. OLYMPIC construction and launching in two leading engineering magazines ‘The Engineer’ and ‘Engineering’ 1910-1911.
3. OLYMPIC and TITANIC construction published in ‘The Shipbuilder’ magazine midsummer 1911.
5. OLYMPIC photographs of arrival in the River Tyne on 13 October 1935 and subsequent demolition in Jarrow and Inverkeithing.
6. OLYMPIC auction catalogue of her fixtures and fittings during 5-18 Nov 1935 in Jarrow by Knight, Frank, & Rutley auctioneers by direction of Thos. W. Ward Ltd.
7. OLYMPIC outturn records of all the materials removed and recycled 1935-1937 in Jarrow by Thos. W. Ward Ltd.
8. ASTURIAS records of the use of this liner in 1957 in making the British drama film of 1958 “A Night to Remember” about the sinking of the TITANIC.

Conspiracy theories abound over the loss of the TITANIC. One of the more bizarre was written up in the book ‘Titanic: The Ship That Never Sank?’ by Robin Gardiner. He alleges that White Star exchanged the identities of the two ships before TITANIC left Southampton, supposedly as an insurance scam. Quite apart from the sheer implausibility of the exchange, how could it be kept secret from the thousands of crew members, shipyard workers and dock workers who would have seen what was going on? We have irrefutable evidence that it was indeed OLYMPIC that went for scrap in 1935, not her sister TITANIC masquerading as such. Shipyards used a ‘yard number’ to identify ships under construction (which might not be named until near completion) which enabled track to be kept of materials and costs. Thus many components had the yard number marked on them, equipment, furnishings etc, with OLYMPIC being Harland & Wolff’s No. 400 and TITANIC No. 401. Among the furnishings sold in 1935.
was panelling from her public rooms. Some was used in the buildings of Smith and Walton paint factory at Haltwhistle, Northumberland – later owned by Akzo Nobel. These were on display prior to their sale in 2004. Some of the panels had the No. 400 on them, showing that they did indeed come from OLYMPIC, not her sister.

The photo (dated ca.2004) below shows a wood panel clearly marked as the ‘1st Class Gents Lavatory on Bridge Deck for No. 400’. Ref: Ian Buxton. Private photograph, ca.2004.:-

2. OLYMPIC construction and launching in two leading engineering magazines ‘The Engineer’ and ‘Engineering’ 1910-1911.

Containing high quality articles with illustrations and photographs.


Although photographs are often of higher quality than in ‘The Engineer’, compared with ‘The Shipbuilder’, example pages are not given here because many similar materials are presented in ‘The Shipbuilder’ of 1911 described below.
3. OLYMPIC and TITANIC construction published in ‘The Shipbuilder’ magazine midsummer 1911.

The magazine ‘The Shipbuilder’ was a splendidly produced monthly with much information on the contemporary shipbuilding scene and recent ships. For notable ships, it also produced a hardback souvenir number, covering the design, construction and trials. The TITANIC souvenir’s original cost was 2/3d [2 shillings and 3 pence = 11.4 new pence], or 4/6d hardback [4 shillings and six pence = 22.5 new pence], say £25 in today’s money. Second-hand copies sell today for over £1,500. The Collection has a copy containing 130 pages, over 146 photographs and fold-out drawings, mainly of OLYMPIC. Ref: ‘The White Star triple-screw Atlantic liners "Olympic" and "Titanic": 45,000 tons. The largest steamships in the world.’ In: The Shipbuilder, vol.VI, Midsummer, Souvenir Number/Special Number, 1911, The Shipbuilder Press, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and the Gilbert-Wood Press, Norfolk House, Victoria Embankment, W.C., 130 p & appendices, 146 photos, diagrams, & sketches. The monthly issues also contain progress reports from Belfast during construction which started in 1908, references not cited here. Sample pages from 1911:-
THE

SHIPBUILDER.

A Quarterly Magazine devoted to
The Shipbuilding, Marine Engineering and Allied Industries.

Edited by A. G. HOOD

VOL. VI.

MIDSUMMER, 1911.

Special Number.

The White Star Liners "Olympic" and "Titanic."

GENERAL INDEX.

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With the following Plates:—

I. The "Olympic" at Sea (in colours).
II. The First-class Dining Saloon of the "Olympic."
III.
IV. Elevations and Deck Plans of the "Olympic" and "Titanic."
V.
VI. Elevations and Plans of Boiler Rooms Nos. 1 and 2.
VII. Elevations of Engine Rooms.
VIII. Plans of Engine Rooms.
Passenger elevators were of a more advanced design than had been previously installed in any ship and were one of the many luxury features:-
Some of the first-class restaurant wood panels and furnishings are now in the magnificent Olympic Suite at the White Swan Hotel, Alnwick, Northumberland:-

The ship 1911

The suite ca.2010
A stark comparison between first-class and third-class accommodation:

Interesting scale between man and machine as one of four completed funnels is wheeled out of the workshop:


Bill of Sale (only top half shown. Full document in the Collection):-
One of Ward’s publicity brochures of 1938, features OLYMPIC (centre) and the shipbuilding gantries (left) at Jarrow where she was broken up. Ref: ‘Dismantling and
re-construction: Millions of pounds value converted once more to industrial use’.
Inside front cover of Thos. W. Ward Ltd. 60 Years of service 1878-1938. The Company, Sheffield, 1938, 76 p.:-

5. OLYMPIC photographs of arrival in the River Tyne on 13 October 1935 and subsequent demolition in Jarrow and Inverkeithing.

The arrival of OLYMPIC in the Tyne under her own steam on 13 October 1935 was recorded by photographers for Wards. The Collection has a few, although not our copyright. Ref: Thos. W. Ward Ltd. Photographs of the OLYMPIC, 1935, loose-leaf photographs. Sample photo:-
Ward also took progress photographs of her demolition, some of which are in an album with annotations, which were donated to the Collection when Ward stopped shipbreaking in the 1980s. Ref: Thos. W. Ward Ltd. Some materials held in the Marine Technology Special Collection, Newcastle University. Ward, Various loose-leaf & bound volumes, 1878-ca1981. Sample photos:-

Workmen using an oxy-acetylene cutter dismantling part of the superstructure at Jarrow 31 Aug 1935:-

Card showing materials removed during breaking by Ward at Jarrow and Inverkeithing 1935-1947:-
6. OLYMPIC auction catalogue of her fixtures and fittings during 5-18 Nov 1935 in Jarrow by Knight, Frank, & Rutley auctioneers by direction of Thos. W. Ward Ltd.

After a passenger liner had been sold to shipbreakers, an auction was usually held to sell items of equipment and furnishings. In the case of OLYMPIC the auction was held in 5th to 18th November 1935 at Thos. W. Ward, Palmers Works, Jarrow-on-Tyne. The auctioneers Knight, Frank & Rutley produced a catalogue, of which the Collection has a copy. The sale of these items yielded about £12,000 for her breakers T W Ward of Sheffield. Some of those fittings can be seen today, notably in the dining room of the White Swan Hotel in Alnwick. Ref: ‘A catalogue of the contents and equipment of The Olympic which Knight, Frank & Rutley will sell by auction in the ship at the wharf of Messers Thos. W. Ward Ltd, Palmers Works, Jarrow-on-Tyne on Tuesday, November 5th to ... ... Monday, November, 18th, 1935. At Eleven o’clock precisely each day’. By direction of Thomas W. Ward Ltd, Sheffield. White Star Line & Knight, Frank & Rutley, 1935, 365 pp. Example pages:-

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**CATALOGUE

of

Messrs. KNIGHT, FRANK & RUTLEY'S

FIRST DAY'S SALE

OF THE

R.M.S. OLYMPIC

AT JARROW DOCKS.

On TUESDAY, the 5th day of NOVEMBER, 1935.

By Direction of THOS. W. WARD, LTD., SHEFFIELD.

SUN DECK.

A pair of mahogany frames without upholstered in red figured damask, 6 ft. wide.

A set of three cane Monte Carlo chairs in each.

A pair of simulated mahogany tables, on pillar and tripod, 4 ft. diameter, and red leather cover.

A mahogany dropt leaf table, with four chairs, a return board, and a fibre seat.

The paired mahogany yachting, 17 ft. 6 high, 35 ft. 4 by 18 ft. 10, fitted door, four windows, four roller blinds, a mahogany workshop, 9 ft. 6 wide, and a folding stairs 3 ft. 2 wide.
Details of the Captain's rooms and Smoking Lounge -

Shipbreakers kept records of all the materials they removed from ships being broken up, their quantity and value such as steel, equipment, machinery, furnishings, non-ferrous metals. This 'outturn' was important not only for accounting purposes but also to help estimate how much they might expect from similar vessels offered for sale in future. Ward kept huge loose-leaf ledgers for each ship demolished, most of which The Collection has from about 1900 to 1960, covering some 1596 ships. A separate catalogue listing those ships is available in the Collection.

In the case of OLYMPIC, there are 72 pages of outturn records, covering both initial demolition at Jarrow on Tyne in 1935-6 by Ward but also final demolition of her hulk at Inverkeithing in 1937 onwards. The first page shows that she was open to the public for about 14 days prior to demolition starting, with about 40,000 visitors viewing at 1/- (one shilling = 5 new pence) per head adults and 6d (six pence = 2.5 new pence) children, yielding a total of £1572 in charity for local hospitals. The total outturn was

7. OLYMPIC outturn records of all the materials removed and recycled 1935-1937 by Thos. W. Ward Ltd.
about 38,000 tons of 4,000 non-ferrous metals, 25,000 general scrap, 1,500 timber, rubbish 3,000.

Note that the weight of the ship in tons (displacement) is NOT the same as the gross tonnage, which is a measure of volume. OLYMPIC gross tonnage was 46,439 in 1935.
8. ASTURIAS records of the use of this liner in 1957 in making the British drama film of 1958 “A Night to Remember” about the sinking of the TITANIC.

While the 1958 film “A Night to Remember” by the J. Arthur Rank Organisation and starring Kenneth More was not on the lavish scale of James Cameron’s 1997 “Titanic”, a real passenger liner was used for the lifeboat scenes. These were shot on board Royal Mail’s ASTURIAS (1925-1957) which had arrived at Shipbreaking Industries’ yard at Faslane on the Clyde on 14 September 1957. The Collection has many of the shipbreakers records donated by the company when it ceased shipbreaking in 1981. Among them is a file on the filming. Ref: Shipbreaking Industries Ltd. Some company records held in the Marine Technology Special Collection, Newcastle University, various loose-leaf, ca.1925-1981. Sample pages (apologies but originals are poor quality):-

![Image of a document]
MEMORANDUM.

To: Mr. J. Arbuthnot, Production Manager.
From: Mr. R. Wilson, General Manager.

Subject: Work in Progress on the Olympic.

This is to inform you that we are making good progress on the Olympic. The painting and rigging teams are working hard to meet the deadline for the launch of the ship. The painting team has completed the first layer of paint on the hull and is now moving on to the upper decks. The rigging team is working on the mainmast and rigging structures. The forecastle deck is also being painted and rigging work is progressing well.

Please ensure that all necessary materials and equipment are available to support this work. The project team is working closely with the shipyard to ensure that the ship is completed on time.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

[Date]

MEMORANDUM.

To: Mr. J. Arbuthnot, Production Manager.
From: Mr. R. Wilson, General Manager.

Subject: Work in Progress on the Olympic.

This is to inform you that we are making good progress on the Olympic. The painting and rigging teams are working hard to meet the deadline for the launch of the ship. The painting team has completed the first layer of paint on the hull and is now moving on to the upper decks. The rigging team is working on the mainmast and rigging structures. The forecastle deck is also being painted and rigging work is progressing well.

Please ensure that all necessary materials and equipment are available to support this work. The project team is working closely with the shipyard to ensure that the ship is completed on time.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

[Date]
INDENITY,

In consideration of your permitting us to use the vessel "ASTURIAS" in connection with the making of a film we hereby agree that we will be responsible for and will release and indemnify Shipbreaking Industries Limited and/or Metal Industries (Salvage) Limited and/or British Iron & Steel Corporation (Salvage) Limited and their servants or agents from and against all liability for personal injury or illness (whether fatal or otherwise) loss of or damage to property and/or any other loss, damage, costs and expenses however caused or incurred.

for and on behalf of
J. Arthur Rank Productions Limited

(Secretary)

31st October, 1957.

NOTE FOR FILE

J. Arthur Rank Organisation

The main personnel who attended الشمال for the filming on "ASTURIAS" were:-

Director - Syd Haynes
1st Assistant - David Orton
2nd & 3rd Assistants - Eric and Ron
Photographic Director - Paul Benson
Assistant Art Director - Ernie Archer
Production Manager - Douglas Peirce
Secretary to Mr. Peirce - Mrs. Teresa Holland
Assistant Casting Director - -- Owen.
### Titanic & Olympic

#### Materials Used by Electricians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electrical Wire</td>
<td></td>
<td>£4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Cables</td>
<td></td>
<td>£3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switchgear</td>
<td></td>
<td>£2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel Boarding</td>
<td></td>
<td>£1.50</td>
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#### Costs

<table>
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<th>Item</th>
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<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</tr>
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### Submarine Telephones

#### Direct Connections

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparing and transporting</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loading telephone boxes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing and powering telephone boxes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning accommodation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Other Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Painting and cleaning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairing and preparing telephone boxes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Footnotes

- Local rates apply for local calls.
- Phone boxes are provided.
- Rates are subject to change without notice.
How to contact the Collection:

The Marine Technology Special Collection
School of Marine Science and Technology
Newcastle University
Room 3.32
Armstrong Building
Queen Victoria Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 7RU
United Kingdom

Email: marine.archive@newcastle.ac.uk

Telephone: +44 (0) 191 20 83522 (direct line)
or 86718 (Marine Offshore Subsea Technology Enquiries)

URL:
www.ncl.ac.uk/engineering/about/facilities/marineoffshoresubseatechnology/specialcollection