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.

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."

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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. Elevation and Deck Plans of the "Olympic" and "Titanic."
IV. Elevation and Plans of Bulk Rooms Nos. 1 and 2.
V. Elevation of Engine Rooms.
VI. 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:-

![Third-class general room](image1)

Fig. 119.—Third-class general Room.

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

![Last funnel of the "Olympic" leaving the Shops](image2)

Fig. 47.—Last funnel of the "Olympic" leaving the Shops.


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
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:-
Details of the Captain's rooms and Smoking Lounge-

7. OLYMPIC outturn records of all the materials removed and recycled 1935-1937 by Thos. W. Ward Ltd.

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...
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.

Sample page:-
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):-
SHIPSBREAKING INDUSTRIES LIMITED

MEMORANDUM.

Mr. M. Whitlock, Universal House, London.
Mr. H. Williams, Blackpool.
11th October, 1929.

Mr. J. Arthur Rank Productions Ltd.,

For your information, please note that after a visit from Mr. Vickers (Art Director), Mr. Rankine (Production Manager), Mr. Whitlock (Chairman), and Mr. Bower (Director of the film), we have made a verbal arrangement with Mr. Rankine, Producer, of J. Arthur Rank Productions Ltd., Financial Adviser, for the provision of a site at Rosyth, formerly used as a Amendment. The site will contain the shipyard, a building for the assembly of ships, and a workshop for the repair of ships. The site will be paid for by the shipyard, and the necessary tools and equipment will be provided by the shipyard. The site will be ready for use by the shipyard by the end of November.

Yours faithfully,

[Signature]

Cyril Bex, Ltd.
Mr. L. Ranken.
Mr. J. Bower.

SHIPSBREAKING INDUSTRIES LIMITED

MEMORANDUM.

Mr. J. Arthur Rank Productions Ltd.
Mr. A. Whitlock, Mr. Bower, Mr. Harrison.
11th October, 1929.

J. Arthur Rank Productions Ltd.

Mr. Smith, Assistant Art Director, and Mr. Jacquemart, Construction Department, called today with two painters and two riggers. The workmen at the site were concerned about the lack of painters and riggers doing work on the ship instead of the workmen they were.

After inspection, the management appeared to be that they would allow the shipyard to paint the ship's side, but the skilled painters will generally have to do the two 1166 ships. The riggers, according to Smith, should do the rigging work for the removal, using possibly material supplied by J. A. R. through the rigging and hoisting steel, Ltd.

At the moment, it would appear that the ship will send two painters and possibly four riggers about the 21st October for one week before filling.

Unfortunately, there appears to be some doubt in the mind of the shipyard as to whether the ship for the hull should be six or eight rope, wire rope. Whether we fit additional second-hand or new-second-class blocks. No further steps should be taken until this is known.

I have indicated that we will endeavour to supply three men for each of the eight rope, wire rope. We will also be able to control the additional rope falls which we are sending.
J. ARTHUR RANK PRODUCTIONS LIMITED
PINEWOOD STUDIOS - IVER HEATH - BUCKS

INDEMNITY.

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 Tanglane for the filming on "ASTURIAS" were:-

Director - Syd Hayers
1st Assistant - David Orton
2nd & 3rd Assistants - Eric and Ron
Photographic Director - Paul Benson
Assistant Art Director - Ernie Archer
Production Manager - Dougie Pairs
Secretary to Mr. Pairs - Mrs. Theresa Holland
Assistant Casting Director - G. Owen.
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