



The former Harland & Wolff Headquarters Building and Drawing Offices



Referred to as the 'Main Offices' on many of the maps of the shipyard, the two Drawing Offices were constructed first in 1886 and were designed to capture as much natural light as possible. They were unique for shipyard drawing offices as they were usually temporary wooden structures that could be easily moved around the site. But as Harland and Wolff began to establish themselves on Queen's Island they had plenty of land to expand into, and the Drawing Offices served as a physical example of what they could produce in their client's ships.

Many of the same features that could be found on the Olympic class liners are also in the Drawing Offices, such as the dentil moulding that lines the walls. The floors throughout the building were laid with the same tiles as the first class smoking room and the swimming baths on Titanic. The theory persists that these tiles were destined for the last of the Olympic Class liners, the Britannic, but when it was requisitioned to be a hospital ship in the First World War, the tiles were surplus to use. The building is also built of the same battleship quality steel as many of Harland and Wolff's ships.



The HQ Building & Drawing Offices expanded along with the shipyard, with Accounts and Admin Blocks added in 1906-10, and the front first storey offices expanding further in 1912 to join the Admin and Accounts Blocks to the Drawing Offices and create the redbrick and sandstone façade that the building retains. A fourth floor was added later, along with small pavilions that contained additional drawing offices, including a strong room that stored all of the ships plans. The two Drawing Offices have had minor changes over the years. With the advent of electric lighting, there was no need for so many windows – which proved to be so hot in the summer months that those in the roof had to be whitewashed – and they were bricked up or taken away completely. One of the side walls of Drawing Office 2 was remodelled following the addition of a reproduction department to avoid the fumes from the print making equipment leaking into the offices.

As the shipbuilding industry began to decline, the building itself changed as well. The beautiful Presentation Room, which was an ornate room overlooking Drawing Office 2 where important clients



had their ship plans presented to them, became a display room, with rows of wooden cabinets and samples of tiles and fixtures and fittings clients could choose from. The wooden panelled Boardroom was painted over and a false ceiling added to accommodate modern lighting and ventilation. The fourth floor was removed, and the small pavilions demolished. Some of the beautiful lino and ceramic tiles that were wearing away were covered with modern linoleum. Always a working building the HQ Building & Drawing Offices had to adapt to suit the needs of the shipyard. By the 1980s shipbuilding had declined greatly, and though Harland & Wolff were diversifying into oil rigs and platforms, the business had changed. In 1989 it was

privatised in a management / employee buy-out, and the HQ Building & Drawing Offices was abandoned along with a large parcel of land on the Queen's Road.