

# Historic BELFAST

A guide to  
the City's  
landmark  
buildings



**LOOK UP!**  
For residents and visitors alike,  
Belfast's buildings tell a wealth  
of stories about this great City

This leaflet highlights 40 landmark buildings. They symbolise an era when the City was at the forefront of industrial growth in Britain and Ireland. Today, buildings are central to Belfast's cultural renaissance and economic growth.

Use this guide to wend your way around Belfast's history. The main trail visiting forty landmark buildings is marked in green. If you're short on time, follow the blue trail. This will take you on a forty five minute tour taking in five must-see buildings: the Grand Opera House, City Hall, St Anne's Cathedral, Custom House, and Belfast's oldest surviving building, McHugh's Bar - where refreshments are served!

-  Industry & Commerce
-  State & Civic Life
-  Entertainment & Leisure
-  Worship



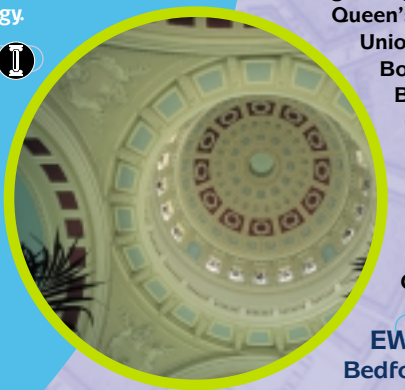
For further information,  
please contact:  
**Heritage Officer**  
**Belfast City Council**  
**Development Department**  
**Cecil Ward Building**  
**4-10 Linenhall Street**  
**Belfast BT2 8BP**  
**Tel: 028 9027 0225**  
or email:  
[crozierb@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:crozierb@belfastcity.gov.uk)



*Belfast*  
**City**  
... telling our stories



- 1 ALBERT MEMORIAL CLOCK**  
Victoria St. 1865 (W. Barre)  
Leaning 1.25 metres (4 feet) off the vertical, the Clock's unsteadiness is due to the fact that it was built on land reclaimed from the river. The tower is 35 metres (113 feet) high and centres around Prince Albert, Victoria's consort. Crowned lions holding shields and floral decoration surround the clock itself. Also designed by Barre in Belfast: Bryson House, Bedford Street.
- 2 BITTLE'S BAR**  
Victoria Sq. 1868 (Thomas Jackson & Son)  
Belfast's only "flat-iron building". Also notable for its polychrome brickwork. The lounge is decorated with portraits of Ireland's literary heroes, including Wilde, Yeats, Joyce and Beckett. It was once a favourite haunt of theatre-folk, and was known as The Shakespeare. Now, Bittle's Bar punters come from far and wide. Also designed by Thomas Jackson in Belfast: Clonard House, Clonard Park; Music Hall, May Street (now demolished).
- 3 CHRIST CHURCH**  
College Sq. North. 1833 (William Farrett)  
A Classical Revivalist church which sadly became redundant in the early 1990s, and was burnt out by vandals in 1996. The Belfast Buildings Preservation Trust and Royal Belfast Academical Institution have plans on the go to refurbish it as a centre of excellence in Information Technology.
- 4 BELFAST CITY HALL**  
1896-1906  
(Alfred Brumwell Thomas)  
The home of Belfast City Council. A magnificent Edwardian "wedding cake", built to reflect Belfast's City status, granted by Queen Victoria in 1888. The Dome is 53 metres (173 feet) high. Figures above the door are "Hibernia encouraging and promoting the Commerce and Arts of the City". Go inside to find out about guided tours and to pick up a leaflet about the statues in the gardens.
- 5 COLLEGE SQUARE NORTH**  
Built in the 1820s and 1830s, these houses were refurbished by a historic buildings preservation organisation, Hearth, in the 1990s, and are leased at low rents for social housing.
- 6 CROWN LICQUOR SALOON**  
Great Victoria St. 1839-1840  
The Crown is owned by the National Trust. Drinkers of the city know well its opulent marble, brilliant Italian tilework, fine glass engraving, embossed ceiling, and cosy booths bedecked with gryphons and lions. Panels in the restaurant on the first floor were meant for *Brittanic*, *Titanic's* sister ship.
- 7 CUSTOM HOUSE**  
Custom House Sq. 1854-1857  
(Charles Lanyon and WH Lynn)  
A noble building. Take a good look all round it. You'll see figures of Neptune with his anchor and dolphin, Mercury with a sheaf of corn at his feet; Britannia with her trident and royal shield; and winged figures representing Manufacture, Peace, Commerce and Industry. The writer Anthony Trollope worked in the Post Office here until his departure from Ireland in 1859. In the 19th century, orators carried forth outside. One, Frank Ballantyne, denounced "ping-pong and other helleries". Also designed by Charles Lanyon in Belfast: Queen's College; University Road, Union Theological College, Botanic Avenue; Palm House, Botanic Gardens; Belfast Castle, Antrim Road; Northern Bank, Waring Street. Also designed by W.H. Lynn: Belfast Public Library, Donegall Square North; Memorial Methodist Church, Carlisle Circus.
- 8 EWART HOUSE**  
Bedford St. 1869 (James Hamilton)  
Built as the Bedford Street Weaving Factory. William Ewart and Son bought it in 1876. Notice the warm brown sandstone and the flourishes and frills around the arcaded windows and door.





## FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

**Rosemary St. 1781-1783**  
(Roger Mulholland)  
The oldest surviving place of worship in Belfast. Rev. Samuel Haliday, who became the congregation's minister in 1719, established the Nonsubscribers when he refused to subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith. John Wesley preached in the church in 1789. Open to the public on Wednesday mornings: make sure you go inside to view the delightful oval interior, box pews and the 1922 First World War Memorial by Co. Down sculptor Rosamund Praeger.

## THE GASWORKS

**Ormeau Rd and Cromac Dock. 1887-1893**  
(Robert Watt, James Stelfox and John Lanyon)  
The Gasworks fuelled Victorian Belfast's rapid industrial growth. Its profits were the major source of funding for building the City Hall. It closed in 1988. Belfast City Council and the Lagside Development Corporation then undertook to create public gardens with commercial office space. The new entrance, flanked by sculpture columns depicting 'Belfast Industry; past and future', at the centre of the original radiating walkways, symbolises continuity between an industrious past and an exciting future. Historic buildings retained include The Administration Building with its fabulous stairway, and the Clock Tower, Meter House and Klondyke Building.

## GRAND OPERA HOUSE

**Great Victoria St. 1894-1895**  
(Frank Matcham)  
Matcham was the leading theatre architect of his time. Notice the twin domes, Moorish lantern and ornamental pediment. Restored in 1980 following bomb damage and years of dereliction, and bombed twice since. Now restored to glory, and the centrepiece of Belfast's 'Golden Mile'.

## HAMILTON STREET

**1830's**  
One of many Georgian terraces in the Markets Area. By 1988 had fallen into serious disrepair and looked set for demolition. Instead, was painstakingly restored by Hearth. Original moulding, stairways, doors, roofs and chimneys were reinstated. The houses were then auctioned, with a discount offered to local families.

## HARBOUR OFFICE

**Corporation Sq. 1852-1854; 1891-1895**  
(George Smith and WH Lynn)  
This is an impressive Italianate building. The Harbour Commissioners manage the state-owned lands around the docks. During the 19th century, the Belfast port was the third most important in Ireland, only outstripped by Dublin and Cork. In the 1840s, the Harbour Commissioners had the Victoria Channel excavated, allowing bigger ships to dock, and used the slob to build Queen's Island. This provided shipbuilders with ample space to develop their yards.

## LINEN HALL LIBRARY

**Donegall Sq. North. 1864**  
(Charles Lanyon, W.H. Lynn and John Lanyon)  
The Linen Hall Library building was once a linen warehouse - you can see linen drapery over the porch. It's Belfast's oldest library, founded in 1788 by leading Belfast radicals to "seek a spirit of general enquiry... for the promotion of knowledge in the city of Belfast and its neighbourhood". People come from all over the world to see its unique Northern Ireland Political Collection. Also designed by John Lanyon in Belfast: Jennymount Mill, North Derby Street; Belfast Castle, Antrim Road.

## MARKS AND SPENCER (RICHARDSON SONS AND OWDEN'S LINEN WAREHOUSE)

**Donegall Sq. North. 1867-1869**  
(Charles Lanyon, W.H. Lynn and John Lanyon)  
This used to have dormer windows and chimneys, blitzed during the Second World War.

## MCCAUSLAND HOTEL (MCCAUSLAND'S AND LYTLE'S SEED WAREHOUSES)

**Victoria St. 1867-1868**  
(William Hastings)  
Was originally two seed warehouses belonging to two rival firms, McCausland and Lytle. Look at Lytle's (on the left) for its fantastic stonework friezes of nut-crunching squirrels, exotic birds and plants; and at McCausland's for heads illustrating five continents, Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Oceania. Now one of Belfast's most prestigious hotels, with an inviting bar.

## McHUGH'S BAR

**Queen's Sq. 1715-1725**  
Belfast's oldest surviving building. Built as a dwelling house on the Town Dock (long since gone), by the edge of the Belfast River. The river was filled in in 1846, and Queen's Square was laid out for Victoria's visit in 1849. Opened in 1998, following extensive restoration, and is now one of Belfast's trendiest bars.

## THE NORTHERN WHIG (COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS)

**Waring St. 1819-1822** (John McCutcheon)  
The Northern Whig's foundation stone was laid on St Patrick's Day, 1819. Built as a high-class commercial hotel with merchants' reading rooms. The Irish traditional music enthusiast, Edward Bunting, met friends there to play Haydn and Beethoven's music. Later used as offices for The Northern Whig newspaper. Blitzed in 1941 during the Second World War. Refurbished in 1997.

## POOR HOUSE (CLIFTON HOUSE)

**North Queen St. 1774** (Robert Joy)  
Established by the Belfast Charitable Society, and built through public subscription and a lottery, to provide accommodation for the aged and infirm poor and an assembly room for the town. Lord Donegall, one-time owner of most Belfast land, gave the ground it was built on. Close by is the CLIFTON STREET GRAVEYARD, famous as the burial ground for thousands of victims of the 1845-1849 famine in Ireland, and for Henry Joy McCracken, executed for his part in the 1798 rebellion.

## RIDDEL'S WAREHOUSE

**Ann St. 1867** (Anthony Jackson)  
An Irish metal merchant had Riddel's Warehouse built. Its polychrome brick and stonework are typical of the High Victorian period. Before it was blocked up, the central archway led to a glass-covered courtyard. Now it's been empty for years. Good news, though, is that it's within the Cathedral Quarter so may see better days soon.

## ROBINSON AND CLEAVER'S

**Donegall Sq. North. 1886-1888** (Young and Mackenzie)  
Used to be one of Belfast's most well-known department stores, Robinson and Cleaver's Royal Irish Linen Warehouse. 50 heads of the firm's patrons pop out of the exterior, including Queen Victoria, and the Maharajah of Cooch Behar, who laid out the rules of snooker in India in 1885! Heads also symbolise countries to which the firm sold products, including Canada and Scotland, which is shown as a Highland chief. Also designed by Young and Mackenzie in Belfast: Ocean Buildings (Pearl Assurance Building), Donegall Square East.

## ROYAL COURTS OF JUSTICE

**Chichester St. 1928-1933** (James G. West)  
The government of the State of Northern Ireland, formed in 1922, paid great attention to the stature of its High Court. Until recently, the building's imposing Neo-Classical style and cast iron lanterns were hidden behind massive security screens, during restoration following bomb damage in 1990. Now, its smooth white walls are like a pearl in the developing waterside area.

## View of SAMSON AND GOLIATH

**Queen's Rd. 1960's**  
The famous cranes are the centre of the shipbuilding company, Harland and Wolff. Each has a capacity of 840 tonnes and London Bridge would look minute beside them. Harland and Wolff once employed up to tens of thousands of people and built the great ship, *Titanic*.

## SCOTTISH PROVIDENT BUILDING

**Donegall Sq. West. 1897-1902**  
(Young and Mackenzie)  
Look around this massive building for 2 sphinxes, 4 dolphins, 16 lion's heads, and 17 queens! Four panels on the bulging centre show printing, ropemaking, shipbuilding and spinning, industries that made Belfast great. Figures above the main door are thought to be a widow with her two children. On the Wellington Place side are carved heads representing England, India, Canada, Sudan, Ireland and Scotland.

## SINCLAIR SEAMEN'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

**Corporation Sq. 1857-1858**  
(Charles Lanyon, W.H. Lynn, & John Lanyon)  
Built for seamen arriving in Belfast. Its minister still visits every ship which docks at the port. Erected in memory of a merchant, John Sinclair. Inside are relics of the age of mariners, including a ship's wheel, models of ships and lighthouses, chronometers and navigation lights from a Guinness barge. The bell from *HMS Hood* is rung as services start, and the lectern is shaped like a ship's prow. Open on Wednesday afternoons from 14.00-16.30.

## ST ANNE'S CATHEDRAL

**Donegall St. 1898-1904** (Thomas Drew)  
Has impressive stained glass windows, and figures of Courage, Agriculture, and Justice. Look out for the four Archangels around the nave, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel and Raphael. The tops of the pillars depict Courage, Science, Commerce, Healing, Agriculture, Music,

Justice, Masonry, Arts, Women's Work, and Wisdom. Baptismal area contains an amazing mosaic of The Creation. Made of over 150,000 pieces of glass, it shows the four elements, Fire, Earth, Air and Water.

## ST GEORGE'S CHURCH OF IRELAND

**High St. 1811-1816** (John Bowden)  
Occupies the site of one of the very first buildings in the town, the Chapel of the Ford, built in 1306 to give travellers a place where they could give thanks for the safe crossing of the River Farset. *Beal Feirste*, from which the name "Belfast" derives, means "approach to the sandbank/crossing". St George's housed the overflow of the congregation of St Anne's Parish Church nearby, before St Anne's Cathedral was built on that site.

## ST GEORGE'S MARKET

**Oxford St, Victoria St & May St. 1896** (JC Bretland)  
St George's originally sold fruit, butter, eggs and poultry and was one of a complex of markets which thrived in the area. Recently restored to become a light and airy space, which flourishes better than ever thanks to the hard work of its traders. Come to the market yourself on Friday mornings - or on the first and third Saturday of every month. You might pick up a bargain! While you're there, make sure you see the historical exhibition about The Markets.

## ST MALACHY'S CHURCH

**Alfred St. 1840-1844** (Thomas Jackson)  
The castle-like exterior and studded Tudor-style door of St Malachy's opens onto an incredible interior with a ceiling like an inside-out wedding cake. In 1868, the largest bell turret in Belfast was added to the church. It was taken away shortly afterwards, due to complaints that its deafening noise interfered with the maturing of the whiskey in Dunville's distillery nearby!

## ST MALACHY'S SCHOOL

**Sussex Place. 1878** (Timothy Hevey)  
A Gothic Revivalist building situated beside the St Joseph's Convent of Mercy. Both were established by the Sisters of Mercy who came from Dublin in 1854.

## ST PATRICK'S SCHOOL

**Donegall St. 1828**  
(Thomas Duff)  
This school is the oldest surviving example of Gothic Revival architecture in Belfast. It was the first National School in the city, and until 1981 was run by the Christian Brothers. It was badly damaged by a fire in 1995, but has recently been restored as offices by the Belfast Buildings Preservation Trust.

## TEDFORD'S CHANDLERY AND SAILMAKERS

**Donegall Quay. 1760-1790; 1855**  
James Tedford supplied ship's provisions at No.5 Donegall Quay. His firm also made sails and rigging, in the sail loft two doors down at No. 9. The 1855 chandlery opened as a popular seafood restaurant in 1998. Tedford's Riggers and Sailmakers recently moved from the sail loft to new premises, in the Gasworks. Once close to the waterside, the candle and sail-making trade-floors were central to Belfast's pre-eminence as a centre of shipbuilding.

## TESCO (THE PROVINCIAL BANK)

**Royal Av. 1864-1869** (WJ Barre)  
An excellent example of the re-use of an old building. The timbers under the building had decayed because Belfast is built on marshy land, so new steel-framed piles were used to underpin the structure. The little golden figures under the sky-blue dome, which arches over the fruit and veg., just have to be seen!

## TOWN HALL

**Victoria St. 1869-1871**  
(Anthony Jackson)  
When Belfast achieved city status in 1888, the Town Hall was not considered imposing enough and the City Hall was built instead. The Town Hall is currently used as Belfast County Court, but before that was occupied by offices of the Ulster Unionist Party. Also designed by Anthony Jackson in Belfast: Riddel's Warehouse, Ann Street.

## ULSTER BANK (METHODIST CHURCH)

**Donegall Sq. East. 1847-1847** (Isaac Parnell)  
Built to serve a sizable congregation around the city centre. Now the façade fronts the new Ulster Bank premises.

## ULSTER BANK

**Waring St. 1857-1860** (James Hamilton)  
Belfast's finest commercial building of its period. Italianate in style. Dramatic group of sculptures at the apex of the façade, depicting Britannia, Justice, and Commerce. Groups of tall urns stand on the corners. The broad, impressive steps were the death of 80 year old director, Robert Grimshaw, when he fell down them in 1867. Sculptures around the huge dome inside symbolise Science, Poetry, Sculpture and Music.

## ULSTER HALL

**Bedford St. 1859-62** (WJ Barre)  
Designed for grand dances, but also hosted political rallies, attended by the likes of Lloyd George, Parnell and Patrick Pearse. There are thirteen paintings of Belfast history inside. Frequently used now as a concert and sporting venue. It's also famous for its huge organ given in 1862 by a wealthy industrialist named Mulholland.

## WATERFRONT HALL

**Oxford St. 1992-1997**  
(Robinson and McEwain)  
Opened in 1997. Widely hailed as a symbol of the new Belfast. Foyers command views over the River Lagan and Belfast hills. This enormous circular, copper domed, Portland stone and traditional red-brick building has already become established as an enduring Belfast landmark.

## YORKSHIRE HOUSE

**1862-1863**  
Was a linen warehouse. Admired for the heads popping out of portholes, representing a range of famous characters, including George Washington, Isaac Newton, Michelangelo and William Shakespeare. Now, the building will be refurbished as a bar, hotel and restaurant, opening Autumn 2001.

