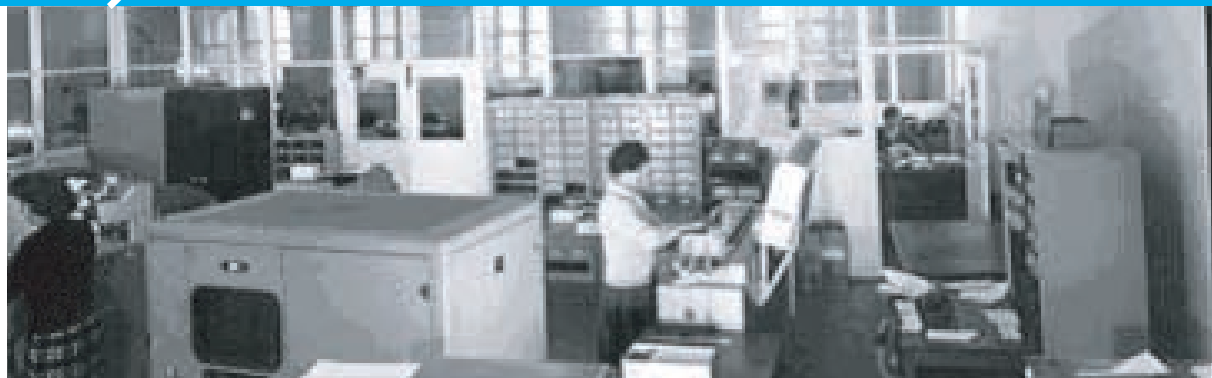




Merseytravel



Merseytavel HQ

The history of
24 Hatton Garden



Merseytravel



Liverpool

OFFICIAL PARTNER
EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE

Merseytravel Headquarters – Hatton Garden

By Phillip Anderton



The Tramway Offices in 1913 (with the Central Fire Station watch tower in the foreground)

The Phileas Fogg Connection

On 29 August 1860, Britain's first ever tramway was opened on the Wirral by the American, George Francis Train, on whom Jules Verne's character of Phileas Fogg in "Around The World In Eighty Days" was based. This was a horse drawn tram which ran from Woodside to Birkenhead Park. Although he offered to remove the tram track if the venture failed, trams were to remain for almost the next hundred years.

In 1865 a trial track was laid in Castle Street by the Liverpool Tramways Company but was removed four years later. Then, in 1868, The Liverpool Tramways Act was passed authorising the laying of tramway and Liverpool acquired England's first authorised tramlines.

Rivalry and financial difficulties accompanied the early tram companies and, in September 1870, the Liverpool Tramways Company and the Liverpool Road and Railway Omnibus Company merged to become, first of all, The Liverpool Tramways and Omnibus Company and then, following a further merger in 1876, the Liverpool United Tramways and Omnibus Company Ltd.

As tram routes and services increased, other companies were also created but, by 1884, most had merged with the Liverpool United Tramways and Omnibus Company Ltd.

The Beginning Of Liverpool Corporation Transport

In 1879, three years after the Liverpool United Tramways and Omnibus Company Ltd was created, Liverpool Corporation bought the company's tramway for £30,000, even though it was valued at £122,000. The company continued to operate the tram services but its fortunes were precarious and, by 1880, it only owned 30 cars and 360 horses. By 1883 further competition had led it to abandon laying further tramway but it continued to operate until 1897.

On 15 July the Liverpool Tramways (Transfer) Act 1897 was passed and, on the 1 September, the company ceased operating and Liverpool Corporation took over the control of the tram services.

The Electric Tramway

The 1897 act also ratified the conversion of the tram system from horse drawn to electric. This applied not only to Liverpool Corporation but to the then neighbouring Bootle Corporation allowing it to electrify the system and lease it to Liverpool. To unify tram services the decision was taken to transfer the former tram company's powers in Bootle (which Liverpool Corporation had acquired under statute) to Liverpool Corporation but opposition from Bootle over the rent to be paid delayed the completion of electrification until 1903.

Work began in November 1898 with the first electric car leaving Dingle and, in May 1900, the first Bootle electric service ran to Old Haymarket. In 1901 101 million passengers travelled by electric tram.



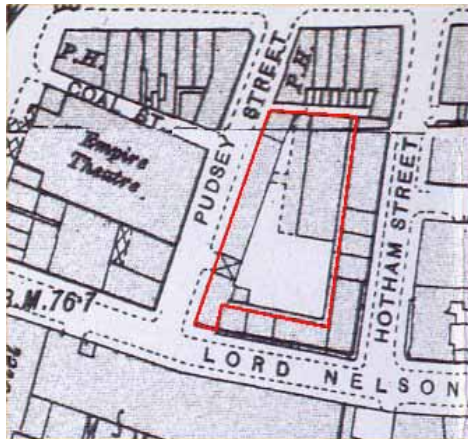
Liverpool Corporation Tram c 1900

Around the same time that Liverpool Corporation was acquiring the former tram company, it was also acquiring the city's electrical undertaking and the Liverpool Electric Supply Company, which had been founded thirteen years earlier, was purchased by the Corporation in 1896.

The Start Of 24 Hatton Garden

The United Tramways Company had been operating from offices in Pudsey Street (on the site of what is now the Odeon Cinema) but the Corporation's activities made larger premises necessary. The overhead lines section, emergency department, clothing store, tailor and saddlers shops and stables

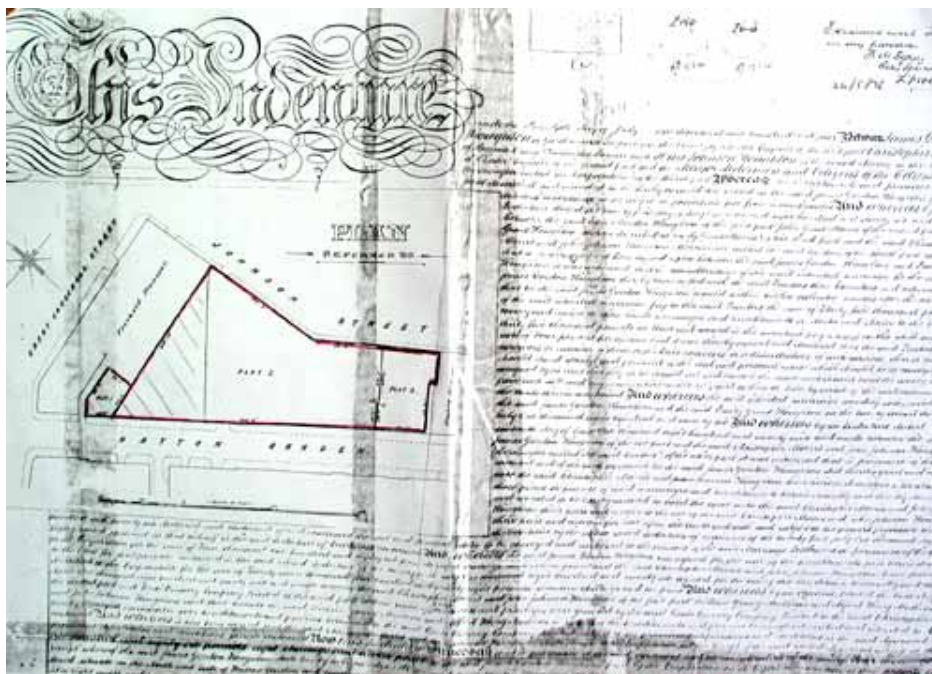
remained there while the other departments moved to 6 Sir Thomas Street in 1899. Even this accommodation soon proved overcrowded and, despite throwing gangways across to two warehouses behind it at 11 Cumberland Street, some of the traffic staff had to be moved to 32 Hatton Garden.



Between 1900 and 1902 it was intended to build a head office for the trams on the reclaimed George's Dock site but instead, the site in Hatton Garden was purchased. At the time, Hatton Garden was one of the most diverse areas of the city's various civic undertakings. On the left was the Central Police Station and the Central Fire Station and on the other, the Fire Salvage Association.

Tramway offices, Pudsey Street,

In the 1920s the Corporation's Health Committee was also looking to locate to premises on the site of what was to become the Post Office Parcel Depot, so it was perhaps only natural that the Passenger Transport Committee should establish itself here.



The 1904 conveyance of land at Hatton Garden to Liverpool Corporation

The site acquired by the Corporation originally belonged to John Gordon Houghton who, the day before his marriage in 1876 to Emily Morris, entered into a settlement whereby he would pay either £35,000 or the equivalent in property to the respective families.

In 1879 he transferred the ownership of two of the plots of land in Hatton Garden to Christopher Morris and John Johnson Houghton, with the third plot remaining with him. The three plots of land were then purchased by the Corporation on 20 July 1904, the plot from John Gordon Houghton for £4,186-8s-11d and the two plots from Christopher Morris and John Johnson Houghton for £27,478-17s-10d.

No. 24 only took up part of the original area purchased. Older buildings on the remainder of the site were occupied by the Overhead Lines Department in January 1906 (while No. 24 was being constructed) and converted to stables for their horses. In the summer of that year two short sidings were built, one with a loading platform which enabled cash and stores to be loaded on to trams converted for the purpose. From then on, the department took over the handling of lost property from the police and also dealt with accident claims.

The tram tracks that led into the garage were only for the smaller cash tram as a full sized tramcar would not have been able to get through the garage gates.

The Construction And Opening

The foundation stone was laid on 12 September 1905 by the Chairman of Tramways Committee, Sir Charles Petrie, using an inscribed silver trowel and the building was all but completed some sixteen months later in January 1907. The cost of construction was £48,650 and was undertaken by Thornton and Sons of Liverpool.

The front elevation was of red pressed brick to the first floor sills and the remainder of Aston Hall stone with red pressed brick bands. Local red stone was used for the windowsills and cornice. Inside, teak was used for the ground floor decoration and mahogany on the first and second floors with American white wood and yellow pine for the third and fourth floors.

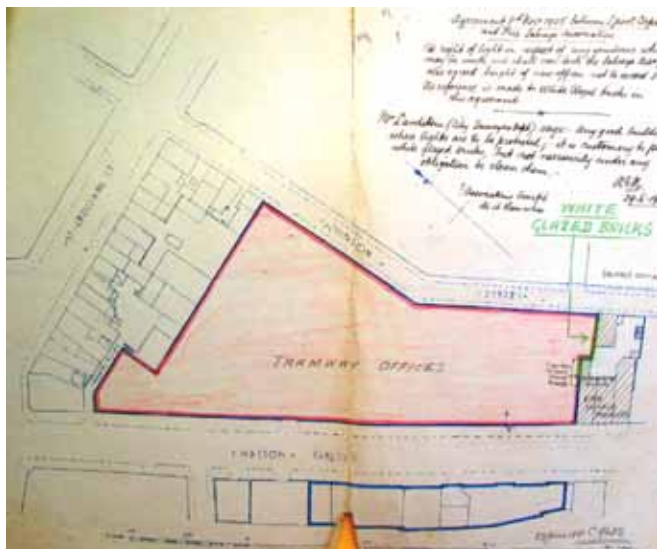


The height of the proposed building led to concerns from the neighbouring owners about losing light to their buildings. In the summer of 1905, before construction began, the Corporation entered into agreements with John Gale and Company Ltd over the road at 11 Hatton Garden and Bents Brewery in Johnson Street restricting the height of the building.

The Fire Salvage Association Ltd were anxious that the building to be erected alongside their premises would overlook

the officers' living quarters and the Association's cottages in Johnson Street. In November that year an agreement was made between the two parties approving the siting of the windows in the new building. Additionally, it was agreed to use white glazed bricks on the gable end to deal with any diminishment of light. By 1931 pollution had dirtied the bricks and the Association sought to get the Corporation to clean them. The Corporation offered facilities to help with the cleaning but insisted that the Association undertook the work at their liability.

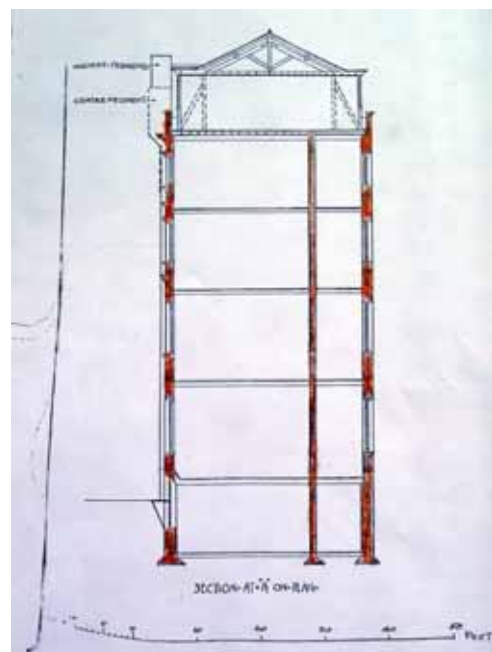
Staff moved in during June 1907 and an official opening ceremony took place in August that year. By now, the Chairman of the Tramways Committee was Alderman Fred Smith who received a golden key, while the Lord Mayor, Richard Caton, received a silver rose bowl and the Corporation Surveyor, Thomas Shelmerdine, a silver cup. Following an inspection of the new building the dignitaries and their guests were driven in decorated trams to Lister Drive Power Station for a reception.



A plan from the 1930s showing the original extent of the Transport Committee's ownership and surrounding buildings

The original design had the overhead line workshops and stores, clothing store and strongroom in the basement. In 1916 a ticket printing press was also installed and ticket printing continued there until the early 1950s.

The traffic and general offices were on the ground floor and the General Manager's office on the first floor. Female staff offices were on the second floor whilst the third floor contained the tailor's workshops, staff dining room, kitchen and caretaker's flat. The fourth floor was smaller than today and originally consisted of garret rooms in the mansard roof space which was used for storage.



A side elevation from a 1905 agreement for light for Gales Buildings opposite

The committees for the Corporation Tramways and the Electric Supply Department merged in January 1906 and thus, the Electric Supply Department's central staff and cash offices were housed on the first floor when the building opened. In September 1931 they were granted the use of two further rooms on the ground and fourth floors.

Thomas Shelmerdine - The Man Who Built No. 24

Thomas Shelmerdine, who was born in 1845, became Liverpool Corporation's architect and surveyor in 1871 at the age of 26 and was responsible for many of the municipal buildings erected over the next 43 years.



**Thomas
Shelmerdine**

These included the distinctive, black and white gable flats in Eldon Street built in 1911 and many of the public libraries which were individual and varied in their designs, including Kensington (1890), Everton (1896), Toxteth (1902) and Garston (1909). Within the city centre he designed the Hornby Library in 1906 and also the layout of St Johns Gardens which were opened in 1904.

In Hatton Garden he designed the Fire Station in 1897 and in 1905 designed the Tramway Offices which opened in 1907.

He retired from his position in 1914 aged 69 and died in 1921.

The Transport Strike Of 1911

The General Transport Strike, which lasted 72 days between 14 June and 28 August 1911, was centred on Liverpool, although other action did take place nationally.

The primary cause was a dispute over local seamen's wages and solidarity action in support of the seamen led to other workers coming out in sympathy including, railway, power station and tramway workers.

A strike committee was formed to represent all the workers in the dispute which developed strategies to control the carriage of goods in and out of the city. Essential goods could only be moved with its permission and other than that, a heavy military and police escort was required.



The 18th Hussars in Hatton Garden lined-up outside the tramway offices.

As the strike continued, different groups of transport workers joined in. A demonstration of at least 80,000 took place at St George's Plateau on Sunday 13 August and, four days later on 17 August, the tramway workers came out - the same day as the railway workers. Many of the tramway workers were dismissed, although later re-instated and, eight days later on 25 August, the strike was over with important concessions won for the striking groups.



An armoured van in Hatton Garden during the Transport Strike (looking down to Dale Street)

The Development Of The Site

As explained, the Passenger Transport Committee owned a far larger area than just No. 24. This area which contained various outbuildings and stables, ran up to Walkers Place (no longer in existence) and along Johnson Street to where the gable wall of No.



Plan showing the buildings in Hatton Garden before the Second World War

24 adjoined the yard and buildings of the Fire Salvage Association. Opposite were premises occupied by John Gale and Company (who were hide and leather factors) known as Gales Buildings. In September 1932 these were being demolished to make way for the Royal Mail Parcel Depot.

The demolition work included part of the Mounted Police stables within the Central Police Station complex behind Gales Buildings and the Passenger Transport Committee authorised the use of 12 of their stalls as a temporary measure until the work was completed at a rent of £1 per week.



Mounted Police Stables 1910

The Passenger Transport Committee's site included 38 and 40 Hatton Garden which were leased to J P Williams who traded as a pet shop.



38 and 40 Hatton Garden to the right of Walkers Place

In the late 1930s No. 38 had become structurally unsound and while it was originally decided to renew the lease on No. 40, the tenancies were terminated and the buildings demolished as it was proposed to build a new office block.



On 11 September 1940, the Minister of Transport sanctioned a sum not exceeding £18,600 to be repaid within 30 years for the construction of new corporation offices. The steel frame was erected but planning permission wasn't issued and the construction was postponed until the 1950s.

The steelwork in July 1950

The Blitz

The Merseyside Blitz lasted over a seven day period between 1 and 7 May 1941. During this time 681 German bombers dropped 870 tonnes of high explosive bombs and over 112,000 incendiaries.

This was the last major air raid on the area and, by the end of it, much of the city centre and docks were devastated with 1,450 people killed in Liverpool and many more casualties. In the middle of the Blitz, 24 Hatton Garden suffered damage.

At 12 minutes past midnight on the morning of Sunday 4 May 1941, the Fire Salvage Association's headquarters at 14-16 Hatton Garden (next door to No. 24) suffered a direct hit and collapsed. At this time there were service cottages for the families of the Association's officers at the rear in Johnson Street. A number of them who were sheltering in the basement were killed including DSO Major Hodgson (who had only commenced his duties with the Association the previous day), the wife and two children of Sm Allister,

Superintendent Cooke and Sm Jones who was running a hose out to fight a fire in Johnson Street. The impact blew the Association's Chevrolet tender across the street and a car was also thrown across Hatton Garden where it rested on two wheels against the gates of the fire station yard.

Other family members who had not been sheltering in the Association's building then took refuge in the shelters that had been constructed in the basement of No. 24 but had to be evacuated when the top floor of the building caught fire. The fire was contained but the top floor remained out of action for the remainder of the War.



Conductors and inspectors on the original 4th floor of 24 Hatton Garden in 1934

On 1 December 1945, The Ministry of War Transport Authority authorised the rebuilding of the fourth floor at an estimated cost of £17,000 and tenders were invited which were to be submitted to the Passenger Transport Committee.



The Machine Room in 1962

The Post War Years

Sixty years after Liverpool Corporation took statutory responsibility for the city's trams the network was replaced with buses in September 1957.

Then, on 1 December 1969, as a precursor to the local government reorganisation of 1974, the responsibility for public transport was transferred to the newly created Merseyside Passenger Transport Executive.



On 30 June 1985, 24 Hatton Garden was given Grade II Listed Building status.

A further significant change occurred on 26 October 1986 when the deregulation of public transport occurred and the provision of bus services was transferred to Merseyside Passenger Transport Ltd. Many of the operational garages

The Lost Property Office in 1958

depots and regional premises transferred to the new company but No. 24 remained the headquarters for the MPTE.



The new Enquiry Office in 1958

The following sources and assistance are gratefully acknowledged in the compilation of this document:

D. C. Wall "The Liverpool Libraries of Thomas Shelmerdine" 1990.
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