

Subject: Gustav Wolff Date: Sat, 28 Jul 2001 17:46:30 +0100 From: "Keith Haines" <keithhaines@lineone.net>
To: <dm286@columbia.edu>

The Will of Gustav Wolff

Public Record Office, Kew (England)

ref: FO917/1624 (document no.204)

(This is amongst wills which are in the possession of the British Foreign Office because individuals have died abroad, or for other reasons. This is a copy of the will; although Wolff died in England, he held property in Shanghai in China!)

Death of Gustav Wolff 17 April 1913

Probate of will granted 8 May 1913.

This copy is presented in His Britannic Majesty's Supreme Court for China at Shanghai.

Wolff lived at The Den, Strandtown, Belfast and 42 Park Street, London (West). He died at the latter residence on 17 April 1913.

One of the trustees of the will was his nephew: Frederick Albert Wolff May (of 38 Leadenhall Street, London).

Gustav Wolff left ?12,000 to F A W May and to William Harland (a son of the Rev Albert Harland - who, I think, was a brother of Sir Edward Harland) to be invested. The income from this investment was to be paid to another of Wolff's nephews: Sydney E May and his wife (who had children).

Various sums were also left to others:

?8000 to Franz Wolff, the son of Gustav's brother, Richard Wolff.

?400 to William Bailey, a clerk at Harland & Wolff (I think he is the son of John Bailey, who had been the chief book-keeper at H&W from the early days and was a very close friend of both men. John Bailey died in 1901).

?200 each to Aileen and Norah Smiles, daughters of Wolff's friend William Holmes Smiles. (The Smiles family lived about half-a mile from The Den at Westbank in Palmerston Road, Strandtown, Belfast.

W H Smiles had founded the Belfast Ropework Company with Wolff in 1875; it became the largest in the world).

?200 to Letitia and Edith Walkington (daughters of the late T R Walkington; I do not know anything about this family).

?400 to John McCandless of the Belfast Ropework Company.

?400 to William Harland (son of Rev Albert Harland).

?8000 to Gustav May, the son of his late sister Ida May.

?1000 to Frank May, brother of Gustav May.

?5000 to Evelyn May, sister of Gustav May.

?12,000 to be invested for Florence, daughter of Ida May.

?11,000 to be invested for Alice, daughter of Ida May.

?8000 for Ella, daughter of Ida May.

?15,000 for his nephew, Gustav Wolff, son of his late brother, Otto Wolff.

He left his niece Clara Fanny May (sister of F A W May) his possessions, in addition to other financial benefits.. He was residing with Clara Fanny May at the time of his death.

Gustav Wolff held property called Cadastral Lot no.29, situated in Nanking Road, Central District of Shanghai.

Earlier notes sent on Gustav Wolff

H Jefferson
Viscount Pirrie of Belfast
(Mullan, Belfast, no date)

Gustav Wolff was born 1834 in Hamburg, son of Moritz Wolff and Fanny Schwabe. Came to England to learn the trade. He was made Harland's partner in 1862 (p.54). In 1892 became Conservative Member of Parliament for East Belfast - was unopposed at 5 subsequent elections (p.55). Retired from Parliament in 1910 (p.56). He was given the Freedom of the City of Belfast as result of his interest in its welfare "and his noble benefactions to her charitable institutions" (p.56), 1911.

Wolff liked East Belfast, and lived at The Den, Station Road, Belfast (p.59). Laconic and good humoured. When asked to make a speech on board a trial trip for a steamer, he said: "Sir Edward Harland builds the ships for our firm; Mr Pirrie makes the speeches, and as for me I smoke cigars for the firm" - and promptly sat down (p.59).

Kind-hearted, charitable, a good friend - also an able financier and fully qualified engineer (p.60).

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)
ref: D3437/B/3B

The East Belfast electors held a meeting (perhaps 1892) to select a new MP. The meeting was held at Connswater (i.e probably the Ropeworks factory), and consisted of many Ropeworks' employees.

The Chairman of the meeting, James McNaught, said "that the meeting was convened for the purpose of testing the feelings of the working men on the question of the future representation of East Belfast. They knew that Mr Wolff and his partner, Sir Edward Harland, had been the making of that district. 36 years ago Ballymacarrett was a wilderness; now it was a large and populous district of the city, inhabited by industrious, loyal and contented people, and this great change had been brought about by the enterprise of Mr Wolff and his partner".

Wolff was a charitable man who, six years earlier, had given a substantial donation to a fund for the relief of the poor and distressed in the district.

An additional speaker said that Wolff was a friend of the working man, benevolent and charitable, and "no place hunter".

Obituary in Belfast News Letter (probably 18 April 1913)

Had died at London residence: 42 Park Street.

He had been suffering from a serious internal complaint for some time.

Characterised by perseverance and determination.

Left Germany at age of 14 to study engineering at Liverpool College.

Frst apprenticed to Joseph Whitworth & Co, Manchester (tools and machinery)

- selected to represent them at the Paris Exhibition, 1855.

Then employed as draughtsman at Goodfellow & Co in Hyde (Manchester).

Then came to Belfast, becoming assistant to Harland at Hickson's yard:

"Mr Wolff's practical experience and shrewd common sense were an immense asset to the firm (of H&W), and in the promotion of its interests he never spared himself".

Also founded Belfast Ropework Co in mid-1870s.
Member of Belfast Harbour Board from 1887 to 1893.
Very modest, but upright and kind.
Made a Freeman of Belfast on 20 April 1911.
Main hobbies were shooting and fishing.
Buried at Brompton Cemetery in London.