

Norwegians in Cardiff



By Anja Olsen



Anja and Oscar Olsen

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We all know and recognise the Norwegian Church down in Cardiff Bay but have you ever wondered why it was built?

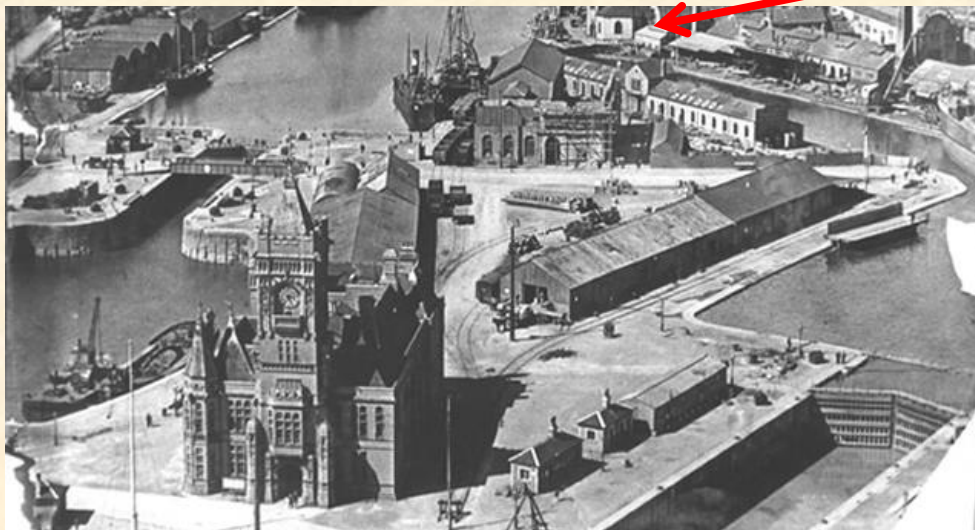


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- It was built in 1868 because lots of people from Norway had come to Cardiff to work in the coal industry and to live
- These people were mainly sailors who brought Norwegian wood to Cardiff to be used in the mines and then took the coal back to Norway to sell



- In fact there were so many sailors from Norway in the city that a charity organisation was set up in 1866 to look after them. This was called the Norwegian Seamen's Mission
- A man called Pastor Lars Oftedal, arranged for a church to be built for the seamen (sailors)
- The church was built in Norway by Herman Lunde and shipped over to Cardiff in 1868
- The Bute family donated some land for the church to be put on



- It was actually called the “Sjomannskirken” which means ‘Seamen’s Church’ even though we call it the Norwegian Church today
- It was made to look like a village church back home
- Inside, the men would pray but also meet and chat with other people originally from Norway . Also they would read books and news papers in their own language and write letters home to their families
- It welcomed about 70 000 people every year and also ran fun events like cookery classes!



- The famous writer Roald Dahl became the first president of the Church trust but his dad has an interesting life too!
- Harald Dahl used to be a farmer in Norway but he moved to Cardiff to try to make money
- He set up a large ship broking business, supplying all the things people with ships would need when they stop in Cardiff, like fuel and food
- He was joint owner of his business with another Norwegian man called Aadnesen Aac. They called their business “Aadnesen & Dahl” and their office was in Bute Street
- Harald made a lot of money; enough to buy a lovely house in Llandaff with his new wife Sophie (she was also from Norway)



- By 1920 there were so many Norwegian families living in Cardiff (about 500) and so many Norwegian sailors staying in the city that the Seamen's Mission thought a new church and lots of new homes were needed. You can see this in this letter.

- They got permission to do this and raised all the money, but for some reason the building didn't happen.

The Norwegian & Scandinavian Citizens of this City and neighbourhood have felt for many years that their Sailors employed in the large Timber and Coal industry existing between Norway and this Port, have no living or sleeping accommodation, other than 'Doss houses' which from a moral, and I may say sanitary point of view have been greatly deplored by their compatriots for years past.

Hence a great effort has been made, both in Norway and by the Scandinavian Shipowners & Brokers of this Port, to raise such a sum (between £20,000 and £30,000) as a beginning of a large Scheme for which the land has been acquired, to house & help the moral welfare of the Norwegian & Scandinavian Sailors during the time they are resident in Cardiff.

- Instead, lots of the visiting sailors stayed in the Scandinavian Seamen's Home in Bute Street
- Sadly, this home was destroyed in World War 2 when Cardiff was bombed one night. 164 people died that night and many of the people from the Seamen's Home are buried in Cathays Cemetery. Ole Pedersen was a caretaker at the home, and died trying to put out a fire and save other people.

Norwegian
Seaman



For Norway

My Norwegian family



My Norwegian family

This is my Great Great Great Grandad Hendry Olsen. He was born in 1849 in Oslo, Norway. He was a Master Mariner and worked as a Captain for a Norwegian shipping company. He moved to Scotland to work. His son Watson joined the Royal Navy and moved to Chatham in Kent. Watson was one of the Navy's first ever divers. His son Victor served in the Navy during WW2. Victor's son Gordon joined the RAF and was posted to Saint Athan near Cardiff and ended up staying here. Gordon married Patricia who lived in Birchgrove Cardiff and their son, Michael, is my dad. This why my name is Anja, because of my Norwegian heritage.



Websites we used for our research

- <http://www.norwegianchurchcardiff.co.uk/>
- <https://www.roalddahl.com/>
- <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/census-records.htm>
- <http://www.warsailors.com/freefleet/memorials.html>
- <http://historypoints.org/index.php?page=norwegian-church-arts-centre>
- <http://www.glamarchives.gov.uk/capital/check/Building%20of%20a%20Capital%202/Worship.html>
- <http://www.oslobilder.no/search?searchstring=%22sogneprest%22>
- <http://sjomannskirken.no/english/>