

## Welcome to the Clydebuilt Virtual Maritime Museum - Braehead Glasgow

This museum is dedicated to the history of shipbuilding on the River Clyde. As you walk through the museum we are going to ask you to look carefully at some of the internationally famous ships that were built; at the working lives of some of the men and women who were connected with the highly skilled and often dangerous industry and contrast the lives of the rich and famous who used Clydebuilt liners to travel the world. We'll also have an opportunity to look at the proud tradition of building battleships which continues to secure the safety of the United Kingdom at home and abroad. We hope you've got your sea-legs, but if you start to feel queasy you could always take a turn around the deck!

Look carefully at the stunning mural on the wall as you enter the museum. It records some of the key events, characters and trades in the history of Glasgow and Clyde shipbuilding.



**Identify the following on the mural and with a friend try to describe and analyse what the impact of these events, characters and trades might have on Glasgow and Clyde shipbuilding:**

- The Great Fire 1652
- St Mungo (6<sup>th</sup> Century)
- Bending the keel plate
- Packing up linen and rope for export
- Riveters
- Port Glasgow 1760
- Riggers
- Anti-Union Riots 1706
- Foremen
- Template makers (Loftsmen)
- Lord Kelvin 1824-1907

**Visit the section of the museum entitled 'History'. You will read there some of the reasons why shipbuilding on the Clyde was so successful. Try to put in rank order the importance of these different factors.**

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Scotland has produced some of the most outstanding engineers that the world has ever known. Their involvement in the development of the shipbuilding industry cannot be underestimated.



**Using an appropriate search engine, find out what you can about one of the following and assess their significance both in their own lifetimes and in the present day:**

- William McQuorn Rankine
- James Robert Napier
- William Thompson (Lord Kelvin)



**Have a look around the section of the museum called 'How to build a ship'. Below you will find some more details of the trade of 'plating'. Read through this and then discuss with a friend:**

- What you deduce about platers from this evidence?
- What you notice about the particular language of the platers?
- How the economic challenges of the squads could be resolved in today's world?

Platers were the tradesmen who cut, bent and shaped the steel plates which formed the steel hull and punched a thin ribbon of steel holes around their sides, ready for riveting. 'Dabbing-up' was making the centre of rivet holes by hammering the plate with pointed steel rods. The tradesmen worked inside sheds.

*'The sheds were only a roof over you head and dirt floors with the wind and rain blowing in on you. I've seen us wi' a heavy job working the punch wi' the sweat blinding ye and the icicles hanging to the machine. It was that bitter that there were icicles but you were sweating you were working that hard.'*

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Despite the extreme conditions, there were notices posted which read:

- *Anyone found loitering at the furnace will be dismissed.*

Plating was very labour-intensive and the enormous steel plates were usually man-handled or 'shouldered' between different machines or from one shed to another. To protect themselves against the razor sharp edges, the platers wore 'bratties' or aprons made of the heavy canvas bags that had been used to hold the washers.

*Many a time I went home wi' ma shoulders raw wi' carrying heavy angles all about the shed on ma' shoulders.*

A plating gang consisted of about six or seven men who would work together in a team, often without any direct supervision. The most important gang member was the one who could read the scale blueprints drawn by the draughtsmen and made the delicate wooden templates which the gang then had to cut out. Other members of the gang were responsible for rolling the plate and then hanging it on the ship's sides ready for riveting.

The skilled gangs were paid strictly by output. Each squad leader bargained for wages on behalf of his workmates, as they were not permanent employees of any one ship yard but were hired just to complete their part of the ship build. In effect the squad was a union within a union as it was self-regulating, setting both the pace of the work and the quality. These gangs were often a thorn in the side of the foremen and management (the bowler hatters) because they could not really manage them at all. To make things even more complicated they sub-contracted work to 'helpers' who they used to help move the steel plate and whose wages were paid by the squad! The majority of these helpers would simply stand in very often freezing cold conditions in the yard market and wait for the chance to work, very often only for half a day. There was a great deal of unfairness in this system and it was open to bribery, bullying and religious discrimination, particularly against Irish workers. The social conditions which such men and their families endured as a result of the employment practices in the shipyards were often very harsh and their homes were little more than ghettos.

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Now you have visited all the processes, trades and crafts that went into the making of a ship, we can focus on perhaps the most famous ship built on the Clyde, the Queen Mary, or the '534' as she was known. At the time of her launch in 1934, she was the world's largest ship. She was launched in the presence of King George V in the great depression that had closed Brown's Clydeside shipyard for two years, delayed her completion and had made over 3000 workers unemployed for that period of time.

What a contrast for then between these Glasgow folk and the 20<sup>th</sup> century millionaires, society hostesses, politicians and film stars who made the crossing between Europe and America on Queen Mary!



**Below you will find a list of film stars, celebrities, politicians, writers and notables who travelled on the world's greatest passenger liner. Choose one from each category and explore their identities, cultures, values and attitudes.**

Churchill

Montgomery

Dwight D  
Eisenhower

Duke of Windsor

Eleanor  
Roosevelt

Helen Keller

Tommy Farr

Cary Grant

Samuel Goldwyn

Ray Milland

Tennessee Williams

Noel Coward

Rex Harrison

Alfred Hitchcock

Gracie Fields

Deborah Kerr

Elizabeth Taylor

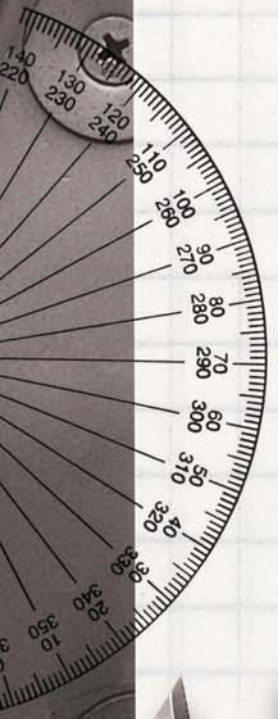
Greta Garbo

Debbie Reynolds

Anna Neagle

Marlene Dietrich

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