

# 100-year Anniversary of *Burrows' first Guide to Belfast*



The publication of this business guide to Belfast marks 100 years since the launch of Burrows' first guide to Belfast in 1908. Much has changed in 100 years but looking back at the 1908 edition it seems that even then Belfast had the same spirit of dynamism and ambition that it retains today, as is shown in this extract:

*'It has been well said that hardly a city in the United Kingdom has been more extensively improved than Belfast during recent years. Undesirable streets and houses have been swept away; fine new thoroughfares have opened up and since 1878 no less than six public parks of great beauty and extent have been laid out.'*

Of course, the 'modern developments' hailed in our 1908 edition look rather quaint compared to the huge new developments like the Titanic Quarter and the Odyssey Complex that feature in this edition. The Port of Belfast features in both the 1908 and 2008 guides, but while today we are reporting that the Port is working towards the £630 million 'Project 2025' to accommodate economic growth, it was a different story in 1908 when only £2.5 million was needed to 'carry out several important works and improvements in the port' including the construction of the York Dock.

Our 1908 edition devoted just one page to 'Commercial Belfast', focusing on the industries that were making Belfast 'the only manufacturing town of any consequence in the "Emerald Isle"'. Linen production was big business and gave constant employment to over 50,000 people in the city and Belfast was also home to the largest tobacco and rope factories in the world. However, the biggest employer by a long way was Harland and Wolff shipyard, employing several thousand people for decades. Today, the old industries of linen, engineering and shipbuilding have declined, with many workers laid off in the second half of the 20th century, but service and technology industries have grown rapidly.

Simply comparing the companies that advertised in the 1908 Belfast Guide and this year's shows up how much business and life in general has changed in Belfast over the last century, these were the companies hoping to attract new customers in 1908....



***'AUSTIN & SONS- Ladies and Gentlemen's Tailors, specialists in riding breeches, ladies jackets and riding habits'***

***'W. Abernethy, Photographer to the late Queen Victoria. This is the leading house in Ulster for all kinds of high-class photography.'***

***'Fry's Cocoa- When touring you will find nothing more invigorating and sustaining than a cup of Fry's pure concentrated cocoa.'***

***'Joseph Beringer- Watchmaker and Jeweller. A magnificent display of the latest and prettiest novelties in jewellery. Prices to suit all purses.'***

One thing that hasn't changed is the appeal of Belfast to both visitors and residents alike, or to echo the author of the 1908 guide, ***'Belfast is a city to visit again and again, without fear of weariness or surfeit.'***