

White Star Line

The White Star Line was originally founded in 1845 by Henry Threlfall Wilson and John Pilkington. The company operated a fleet of sailing clippers between Liverpool and Melbourne from 1852, their first steamship, the Royal Standard made a record voyage to Australia in less than 70 days.

Sadly the company became so seriously in debt that White Star was forced into bankruptcy and was purchased by Thomas Henry Ismay for £1000.

The first change Ismay made was to introduce iron built ships, which featured luxury on a grand scale. The first vessel, the SS Oceanic, sailed on her maiden voyage in 1871 from Liverpool to New York, this was such a success that it made all other Atlantic liners obsolete. The White Star Line was now the most powerful British shipping company, with vessels trading not only to North America but also to Australia and South Africa. Thomas died in 1899, his eldest son Bruce, became Chairman and Managing Director, continuing his fathers high standards.

After the turn of the Century, White Star became part of the International Mercantile Marine, on board were powerful people including Financier J. Pierpont Morgan. Ismay embarked on an expansion programme, creating bigger and far more luxurious ships, which would become Olympic, Titanic and Britannic. During the great depression of the 1930's, the shipping industry suffered; Cunard and White Star Line merged. This was the beginning of the end. By 1958 the renowned White Star Line ceased to exist.