

Carl Bernard BARTELS

1866 - 1955



a booklet in adobe pdf format published by

Gerry Jones
LIVERPOOL MUSICIAN

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Introduction

On the pages that follow is all that I have at present on Carl Bernard Bartels, the designer of the Royal Liver Buildings "Liver Birds". I have referenced where possible the sources of my information, and included any links to the original sources.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further information about Carl Bartels or you if you wish to correct anything that I have included.

I will be adding any further snippets, at the end of the following pages, as they occur in this the year the Carl re-enters the history books. In July 2011, Carl Bartels will be proclaimed a Citizen of Honour of the City of Liverpool.

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The following is the family knowledge of Carl Bernard Bartels and was provided by his great-grandson, Tim Olden of Southampton.

Carl Bernard Bartels

The two Liver Building Birds - a cross between an Eagle and a Cormorant - were designed by a German sculptor, Carl Bernard Bartels. Son of Carl Julius Bartels who lived 1841 - 1911 and was a German Protestant Master-carver/Woodcarver from the Black Forest, Germany, Carl Bernard Bartels was born in 1866 in Stuttgart, Germany. A wood carver himself, and resident of the Black Forest, he came to England on his honeymoon at 21 years of age, in 1887, and loved it so much he stayed, and took British nationality.

Bartels won a competition to design the Liver Building Birds, and created the magnificent design we see today, two 18ft high copper sculptures completed in 1911, with the involvement of the Bromsgrove Trust.

When the Great War broke out Bartels was arrested as a German citizen and imprisoned on the Isle of Man as panic over enemy aliens ran rife. He stayed interned in P.O.W. Camp - Knockaloe Isle of Man 10743, Hut 5.6 1914- 1918.

Worse still, he was forcibly repatriated at the end of the war, despite



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having a wife in Haringey, London. He could not return unless an employer asked for his services. His nephew's employer did so, and in the end he did return to England, though it took him many years. He lived in Haringey until his death in 1955, and he has at least one great-grand-daughter and two great-great-grandchildren.



Carl is the third from the right

The City of Liverpool removed all references to his achievement, very successfully as the next article shows, but there are now at least 20 pages found by Google referring to Bartels.

Step-brother Frank Carl Bartels - Sculptor. Member of NAFTA. Carvers Branch No. 6.

Further commissions include items for a Chapel inside Durham Cathedral, the old "Mauritania" (Liner), Exhibited at Royal Academy 1951, & Stately Homes.

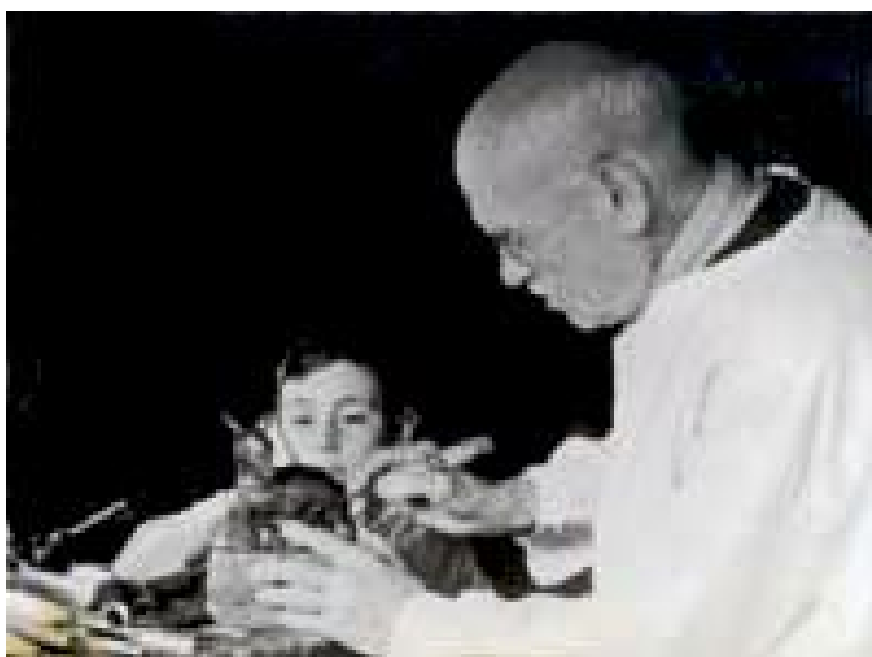
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Tim Olden also writes:

With the original official history we were told that a foundry in Worcester created them, which was later discredited latter as a red herring. This was by the history professor brought in during our visit to Liverpool. (he may be the man named in the second letter).



He also told us of the xenophobia concerning every German national living in Liverpool at the time of the WW1. 75% of all the butchers were German before the start of WW1 but after the war there were none. The John Moores University in Liverpool had a portrait of all the lecturers, and the only one to be defaced was the German teacher. So it is not surprising that a false story was created to cover their tracks and that the history books were rewritten. Who would want the star emblem of the city created by a German?

Carl Bernard was imprisoned at the Knockaloe P.O.W. camp on the Isle of Man and repatriated back to Germany after the war. Leaving his wife in the UK. Only when he got sponsorship/endorsement from a family member here could he come back. He didn't give up carving but produced work for stately homes, in Durham Cathedral, and he submitted work to the Royal Academy. During the WW2 he produced artificial limbs.

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Hans Walter and Nichola Keweloh

Have both reported seeing information in a book on C. B. Bartels at the following address:-

Deutscher Schiff Ahrts Museum, Enten Moor Weg,

Bremerhaven 47

Telephone: 0049 421 27578

Liverpool Daily Post Article

There are many references to the Liver Birds in the local press, various books, and the internet; here are some of the items I have found so far, starting with a comprehensive article by David Charters published in the Liverpool "Daily Post" in connection with Tim Olden's campaign to have Carl Bernard Bartels name restored, and a plaque to his achievements displayed.

"We should carve his name with pride"

They are among the world's most famous symbols. But, in the anger of the Great War, their German creator was forgotten. Now, at last, he is to be honoured.

With his skilled hands and soaring imagination, the man with the modest smile could give life to a block of wood. But nobody ever spoke of the gentle carver's greatest creations, even when they became one of the most potent symbols in the world - silent sentinels over a throbbing port, ever-watching the sullen-grey roll of the water below them. Now, 50 years after his death, a forgotten and shunned German is to be remembered for designing the two birds which perch high on the Royal Liver Building, at the Pier Head. A plaque in his memory is to be placed in the entrance hall to the building. It should be up in plenty of time for the celebrations of 2007, marking the 800th anniversary of

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King John granting Liverpool its Royal Charter, which provides the ideal lead into the following year's European Capital of Culture.

After all, we are talking of a European who made a huge contribution to Liverpool's recent history, though his name will not be familiar to many of you. For most of the history books do not mention Carl Bernard Bartels, designer of the Liver Birds, known to people all over the world as the emblem of Liverpool. Yes, New York has its Statue of Liberty, or Liberty Enlightening the World, the 150ft colossus of the sculptor August Bartholdi, placed on an iron framework designed by Gustave Eiffel, who also gave Paris its 984ft tower.

But the association between Liverpool and its birds is unique. They are on the crest of numerous companies and organisations, most notably Liverpool City Council and Liverpool Football Club. It is impossible to calculate how much they would have been worth if they were a commercial brand – but think of a big number and then add noughts until you fall asleep. More than all that, though, they were a vision of comfort to homeward-bound sailors. If the Liver Birds were on their perch. God must be in his Heaven. Their disappearance into the distance has swelled lumps in the throats of the thousands leaving the river, some never to return.

Of course, they weren't the port's first Liver Birds. But the design of the pair atop the Liver Building became the standard, copied by everyone else. Their "father", Carl Bernard Bartels, was the son of Carl Julius Bartels, a wood carver from the Black Forest. The boy was brought up in Stuttgart and trained under his father, before coming to Britain in 1887 with his young bride, Mathilde Zappe. He was 21. The couple immediately liked the country and



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decided to make it their home. They took up British nationality and settled in the London borough of Haringey, where they had a son, Bernard Charles Bartels, and a daughter, Maggie.

Gradually, their father was gaining a reputation as an exquisite worker in wood. Meanwhile, in Liverpool, in 1908, work began on the construction of the Royal Liver Building, designed by the architect Walter Aubrey Thomas. An international competition was held to find a design for the two birds which were to sit on its twin clock towers. Carl won. His birds were made by the Bromsgrove Guild, a group talented in the Arts and Crafts movement which ceased to be many years ago. The famous building, in many ways similar to those in New York, was completed in 1911.

Three years later, the Great War broke out. Anti-German feeling swept through the UK. Yet, since the middle of the 19th century, Germans had been settling in Liverpool. Pork butchers from the Hohenlohe area, near Stuttgart, knotted their sausages. The fruity smells of baking pastries and the steam from sauerkraut joined the air of a city already rich in aromas. Other Germans worked in the sugar refineries and public houses. But that did little to assuage the hostility of local people. In this mood, Bartels's blueprints and sketches of the Liver Birds were lost or destroyed. Even more seriously, Bartels was interned with others of German origin in a camp at Knockaloe, on the Isle of Man, even though he had been a naturalised Briton for more than 20 years.

Conditions were harsh at the camp, but a spirit of camaraderie developed, particularly among the artists. In Liverpool, anger against the Germans reached its zenith with the sinking of the Lusitania, inbound to the port, in May, 1915. There were riots and German properties were stoned and looted.

After the war, Bartels had to return to Germany, though we are not sure why, leaving his family in London. To come back to his family in England, he had to find an employer, who would vouch for him. This was done. Bartels continued carving,

producing work for stately homes and Durham Cathedral. In the Second

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World War, he worked on artificial limbs for the maimed. He died in 1955 and was buried in London.

Throughout the war, the Liver Birds stood proud over Liverpool, as much of the city was destroyed by enemy bombing. It was not a good time for telling people that the Liver Birds had been designed by a German.

And so things would have remained, had it not been for Bartels's great-grandson, Tim Olden, a graphic artist, from Southampton, and a number of local historians and artists. They have been supported by the Friends of Liverpool Monuments and Merseyside Civic Society in their desire to see Bartels honoured in some way before 2007. In this way, his relevance to the city would be made known to thousands of tourists.

"It is very important that recognition is given to the artist who created an image for the city known throughout the world," says Dr. Peter Brown, chairman of Merseyside Civic Society. The Royal Liver Building and the Port of Liverpool and the Cunard buildings form the Three Graces of the Mersey waterfront. It was originally home to the Royal Liver Friendly, now the Royal Liver Assurance.

Liz Romnes, head of the company's corporate communications, is considering the best place for a tribute to Bartels. "A plaque to him is a great idea," says a Royal Liver spokeswoman. "We have got the main entrance to the building which all our tenants use and the public can come through. We also have our own company entrance which faces the river. It could go in either of those. But it would probably be better where everyone walks through, the central corridor. There's a café in that area. But we need to sort it all out with our business management team. I don't see why it shouldn't be ready for 2007. It is not a big job."

Descendants of Bartels always knew about the Liver Birds, hoping that one day he would be recognised. In 1998, his grand-daughter, Muriel Olden, with her son Tim and daughter, Pippa, visited Liverpool as guests of honour at a dinner in the Royal Liver Building. They met the Lord Mayor and appeared on radio and TV, suggesting that a permanent

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memorial should be erected in Liverpool to the memory of Carl Bernard Bartels. But Mrs Olden died few months later, aged 77, and it seemed that their pleas had been forgotten.

Then articles about Bartels started appearing on the internet and earlier this year Patrick Neill, vice-chairman of the Friends of Liverpool Monuments, took up the case.

"I think my great-grandfather should be credited with the birds," says Tim Olden.. "Somehow, somewhere, it should be known. I recently came up to Liverpool and asked the taxidriviers, who should have the knowledge, if they knew who designed the Liver Birds, but they didn't.

"Even the receptionist in the Royal Liver Building didn't know. Personally, I think it all goes back to the First World War. People didn't want to think that a German designed the famous Liver Birds. It was xenophobia, but I am delighted that a plaque is to be erected to his memory.

"I think that Bartels should be in the history books, there should be a plaque, the taxi-drivers should know who he was and the information should be passed on to the tourists."

But are the birds any good to the keen eyes of an artist?

"When you actually look at them closely, they are astonishingly crude pieces of work, but once you see them from street level, which is the only way you can see them properly, they are absolutely fabulous, they read like a dream. They are quite astonishing," says Robin Riley, the eminent Liverpool sculptor and chairman of Merseyside Civic Society's monuments and open spaces committee. "When he designed them, Bartels would have realised that you cannot put a sculpture up at that height (295ft), you have to obey a set of laws of control and exaggeration." "The idea that his name was quietly dropped because of the anti-German feeling during the First World War rings true with me," says Steve Binns MBE, Liverpool's community historian, "The anti-German feeling was very intense across the country." But now we can honour the name of a German - father of two great birds who watch

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over their river for the sailors of all nations."

davidcharters@dailypost.co.uk

Here is a little-known verse from

In my Liverpool Home

*Our LIVERpool Ladies will HUG and kiss Men,
But a VIRtuous Lady you'll find now and then,
Our eighteen-foot Lyver Birds perched up on high,
They FLAP their great WINGS every time she goes by.
In my Liverpool Home,etc.*

or, as the Romans used to say; "Virgine perambulante, alas agitavero"

Liverpool Heritage Walks

Their booklet contains the following:-

The mythical Liver Birds are made of copper and are 5.5m (18ft) high. The clock faces are 7.6m (25ft) in diameter, making them the largest public striking clocks in Britain. The origin of the Liver Bird is as follows:

King John, in 1207, requiring a port for the conquest of Ireland, granted letters patent to Liverpool, and the town adopted a corporate Seal - the eagle of St. John, the emblem of the House of King John. During the siege of 1644, when cavalier forces sacked Liverpool, the seal was lost; it was replaced by a second seal, but this did not resemble an eagle, possibly due to the ignorance or artistic shortcomings of the designer. As time went by, the bird, which looked like a seagull, came to be regarded as a cormorant, as such birds are prevalent in the Mersey. In the birds beak is a sprig of foliage, probably of broom, the "planta genista" of the Plantagenet royal family.

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Liverpool Monuments Site

Visit [Liverpool Monuments website](#) where you will find an article written by [Keith Bates](#) and some of [Carl Bernard Bartels carvings](#) (the images were supplied by [Tim Olden](#)).