

The Ballin House

# A precious detail of Hamburg's history



Ballin House, Ballindamm

# Anchoring in the world's ports – at home on Ballindamm

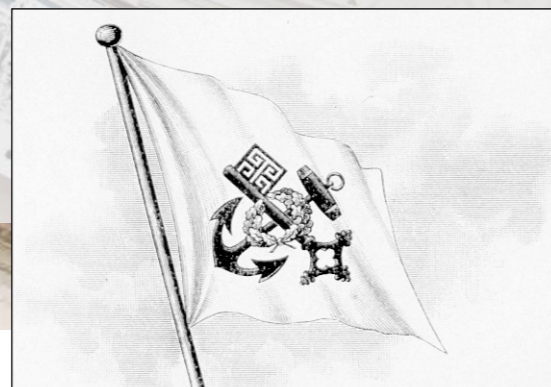


1857

NDL WAS FOUNDED IN BREMEN

1847

HAPAG WAS FOUNDED IN HAMBURG



Hapag-Lloyd AG was created on 1 September 1970 from the merger of the two shipping companies Hamburg-Amerikanische Packetfahrt-Actien-Gesellschaft (Hapag) and North German Lloyd (NDL). The roots of the Company – today one of the world's largest liner shipping companies – stretch back further: Hapag was established in 1847 in Hamburg by local merchants. Initially, it mainly transported European emigrants to America, a booming business at the time.

At the end of the 1880s, Hapag had its first express steamers built, placing it at the forefront of the North Atlantic trade, where Hapag-Lloyd remains a market leader today, albeit now in container transport. Shortly before the turn of the century, under its later Director-General Albert Ballin (1857–1918), Hapag rose up to become the world's biggest shipping company by tonnage.



around 1897

HAPAG IS THE WORLD'S BIGGEST SHIPPING COMPANY

## REVIVED TWICE

With the end of the First World War, however, the remaining fleet was lost under the Treaty of Versailles. During the time of the Weimar Republic, Hapag succeeded, as did NDL, in becoming a leader in international shipping once more. In 1929, just ten years after the Hamburg shipping company had forfeited its vessels, it employed 18,000 people again at sea and on land. However, the "Golden Twenties", the brief respite after the war, were soon over, and there followed recession and, once again, war.

When the Second World War ended, Hapag and NDL were left empty-handed once more. Their fleets were lost to the victorious powers yet again, or had already been sunk to the bottom of the world's oceans by 1945 during the war. When Hapag and NDL returned to liner shipping from 1950 onwards, they had already begun operating joint services for the most part. With the rapid growth of container transport at the end of the 1960s and the need for large-scale investment in containers and new vessels, the two shipping companies combined their strength by merging in 1970. The building on the Inner Alster Lake became the headquarters of Hapag-Lloyd AG.

1918

LOSS OF THE FLEET AS A RESULT OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR



1945

LOSS OF THE FLEET ONCE AGAIN AS A RESULT OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

1970

HAPAG AND NDL MERGE INTO HAPAG-LLOYD



2005

ACQUISITION OF CP SHIPS



*Pillar in the company restaurant, ground floor Ballindamm*

## GROWTH THROUGH ACQUISITIONS

In 2005, Hapag-Lloyd acquired the British-Canadian container shipping company CP Ships, thereby becoming one of the top five international liner shipping companies. The integration of the container business of the Chilean shipping company CSAV in 2014 as well as the Dubai-based United Arab Shipping Company (UASC) in 2017 strengthened this position. CSAV and the Gulf states of Qatar and Saudi Arabia thus became major new international shareholders and joined the City of Hamburg and Kühne Maritime as the existing shareholders.

By the end of 2015, Hapag-Lloyd AG had returned to the stock exchange trading floor following an absence of more than ten years due to it being part of the TUI Group.



2015

STOCK-MARKET LISTING

2014

INTEGRATION OF CSAV CONTAINER BUSINESS DIVISION



2017

AQUISITION OF UASC

## GLOBAL AND FORWARD-LOOKING

In 2021 and 2022, Hapag-Lloyd focused on expanding its market presence on the African continent in particular through the acquisition of the shipping company NileDutch and the container liner business of Deutsche Afrika-Linien (DAL).

This period also saw the acquisition of stakes in several international terminal operators, including J M Baxi Ports & Logistics Limited in India and the Spinelli Group in Italy. These acquisitions not only provided the shipping company with a new business division but also enabled it to gain strategically valuable influence over onshore transport infrastructure.

Despite some deep ruptures in their company histories, one thing has not changed since the early days of Hapag and NDL: The Company is clearly structured, economically successful, forward-looking and globally focused – and has been so for more than 176 years.

Among the Company's core values is social responsibility. In 2018, to mark the 100th anniversary of Albert Ballin's passing, Hapag-Lloyd granted the Albert Ballin Awards for global action and for globalisation research; the second award was given in 2022 as part of the celebrations for the Company's 175th birthday. The old Hanseatic motto "Mein Feld ist die Welt" (The world is my oyster), which greets employees and visitors in the foyer of Ballin House, remains unchanged.



2021

ACQUISITION OF NILE DUTCH

2018

ALBERT BALLIN AWARDS  
GRANTED FOR THE FIRST TIME



2022

ACQUISITION OF THE CONTAINER LINER BUSINESS  
OF DEUTSCHE AFRIKA-LINIEN



# Ballin House – history of a landmark



1900

CONSTRUCTION OF THE FIRST HAPAG HOUSE ON  
ALSTERDAMM IS STARTED BY MARTIN HALLER



Lettering on Ballin House, Ballindamm

The success story of Germany's biggest liner shipping company began in 1847 with the establishment of Hamburg-Amerikanische Packfahrt-Actien-Gesellschaft – then shortened to “HAPAG”, today commonly known as “Hapag”. Initially, the Company mainly transported emigrants to America. It had its first own domicile at 7 Deichstrasse before moving to a magnificent Neo-Renaissance building at 19-20 Dovenfleet in 1890. Its headquarters then began to expand rapidly. Hapag employed 137 people there in 1897, the year of its 50th anniversary. The building on Dovenfleet had become too small. So in 1899, those in charge acquired a row of properties along the Inner Alster lake: on Alsterdamm, today called Ballindamm, an embankment which had only been created in 1842 from the rubble of the Great Fire of Hamburg. The contract to construct the new administration building was awarded to Martin Haller (1835-1925), who had already designed the turreted building on Dovenfleet. He was Hamburg's most renowned architect at the time, and some of his typical villas can still be seen around the Alster lake today. His most well-known work is Hamburg City Hall.

For Hapag, too, Haller built in the Renaissance style that was popular at the time. In 1903, the three-storey building on Alsterdamm was ready for occupancy. It was crowned with a seven-metre-high bronze statue of Neptune with his trident and proud wave horses, the work of then unknown 33-year-old artist Ernst Barlach from Holstein. Unfortunately, the figures no longer exist: They were melted down in the First World War.



1903

COMPLETION  
OF HAPAG HOUSE

## MAP OF THE WORLD FROM 1903 STILL ON DISPLAY

The interior of Hapag's new headquarters was extremely spacious in its design and also served as a check-in space for passenger services. The First Class passengers booked their ship journeys in the Dome Hall. Today, it serves as the company restaurant, and a large map of the world over the entrance still shows the Hapag ship routes at the time.

The relocation from the Kontorhaus district to the Inner Alster lake was commented on in detail in the newspapers of Hamburg. Readers appear to have been particularly interested in where "Mr Director Ballin" would have his office. The "Hamburgischer Correspondent" revealed it: "On the first floor, to the right, with an antechamber, it seems!"

The new Kontorhaus was a large, splendid building, very much in keeping with the taste of the time. The representative Alster façade in particular featured numerous ornamentations. Four mighty, intricate sandstone statues, created by the sculptors Börner and Cauer, flanked the entrance porch. They symbolised the four continents to which the shipping company operated routes.

Enthusiasm in Hamburg was muted, however. The influential art gallery director Alfred Lichtwark is said to have invented a conversation, which a Hamburg local and a stranger reputedly had about the colossal statues and which was enthusiastically spread at the stock exchange and elsewhere. "Tell me, what do these four figures actually mean?" "The five senses." "Five? But there are only four!" "Indeed. Taste is missing..."

## HAPAG HOUSE IS TO GROW BIGGER

The widespread acerbic criticism was not without impact. When the building became too small once again, the contract to extend it this time went to the modern, expressionism-influenced architect Fritz Höger. The Holstein native (1877-1949), together with Fritz Schumacher, was regarded as the father of a new style of Hamburg architecture. In contrast to the plaster construction which was modern at the time, they chose a traditional material from the region: Höger is considered to be one of the most important proponents of brick expressionism. His most well-known clinker building, the Chile House in Hamburg, was constructed in the 1920s and is reminiscent of a large ship.

For the Hapag building, however, Höger had to forgo working with his favourite material. The existing building required the use of light sandstone. The aim was to organically incorporate the existing building, double its size and combine both parts into a single unit.

Höger wanted to do justice to Hamburg's great Hanseatic tradition by all means – but without excessive pomp, too much recourse to past eras and fashionable ornamentation. He added another storey to the existing building facing the Alster and joined the two parts of the building by creating a uniform façade and roof across its entire width. This resulted in the existing building disappearing visually, while its interior was retained.

1913

CONSTRUCTION OF THE EXTENSION TO HAPAG HOUSE IS STARTED BY FRITZ HÖGER



1921

COMPLETION OF THE EXTENSION



Staircase railing, stairwell Ballindamm





## A TECHNICAL MASTERPIECE

What sounds so easy was both a technical and artistic masterpiece which required compromises, however. Anyone not familiar with the building today still has trouble finding their way around and may wonder about seemingly unnecessary corridors, staircases, nooks and odd passageways.

However, this was not visible from the façade. A uniform building complex between Alsterdamm and Ferdinandstrasse was created. It stood there unostentatiously, made of light Obernkirchen sandstone, objective and at the same time elegant, represented only by its material and proportions. It was a completely different style, a new accentuation to Hamburg's gem, the Inner Alster lake.

When the building – construction of which had begun in 1913 – was occupied by its new owner in May 1921, the world was a different place and the zeitgeist had radically changed. The First World War from 1914 to 1918, which interrupted construction for years, also resulted in an architectural rupture. With its unostentatious yet noble objectivity, the Höger building fit perfectly in a world that had become more sober. The fact that Hapag completed its building on Alsterdamm as quickly as possible after the war ended, despite the loss of its entire fleet, was also a demonstration of the will to survive. It was the first new building of major significance to be finished in post-war Hamburg.



1945

ONLY MINOR WAR DAMAGE

## SPARED BY BOMBS IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

In the Second World War, the Hapag building was largely spared by the carpet bombing of the British Royal Air Force as if by a miracle, while other parts of the city were razed to the ground. By contrast, the main NDL building on Papenstrasse in Bremen was completely destroyed by bombs and not rebuilt after the war ended. In Hamburg, however, only the fourth floor fell victim to a fire and the façade was damaged.

During reconstruction, a fifth storey was even added. The entrance hall remained largely undamaged, and temporarily accommodated various departments in the post-war period, before it was used as a reception and representation area once again.



1947

ALSTERDAMM IS RENAMED BALLINDAMM

A few months after the start of the war, the National Socialists accommodated the Court of the Admiral of the Hamburg War Navy Office in Hapag House. For this reason, numerous court cases against members of the War Navy and conscripted seafarers were also held at Alsterdamm until the devastating air raids on Hamburg in the summer of 1943. The judges handed down more than 40 death sentences in the three-year period. A memorial plaque in front of the building today serves as a reminder of this injustice.

In 1947, Alsterdamm was renamed. Albert Ballin, who was Jewish and thus considered by the Nazis to be a non-person, gave it its name from then on – Ballindamm.

In 1997, Hapag-Lloyd honoured its great Director-General posthumously to mark the Company's 150th anniversary. Since this time, the building has borne the name "Ballin House".

1997

NAMING OF "BALLIN HOUSE"  
TO MARK 150 YEARS OF HAPAG-LLOYD'S EXISTENCE



Entrance hall Ballin House, Ballindamm

## A NEW RADIANCE FOR BALLIN HALL

Like the whole building, the large entrance hall that faces the Inner Alster lake is also named "Ballin Hall", after the famous Director-General. Ballin is present here as a bronze bust, surveying the spacious room from the side.

The hall, which Höger designed elegantly and with a playful touch of monumentalism, is resplendent with a fresh, modern radiance following its most recent renovation: New snow-white counters for the reception desk and café, an inviting seating arrangement, together with an interactive information kiosk and the generous use of visual media characterise the setting now. This has created an ambience that conveys a clear and vivid impression of today's Hapag-Lloyd AG while maintaining the recognisable historical context of the building.

Today, Ballin House, a building rich in tradition, houses around 850 employees who work in its offices, some with lofty ceilings. These include the members of the Executive Board and the staff in central departments such as Corporate Communications, Legal, Human Resources, Fleet Management, Controlling and Procurement.

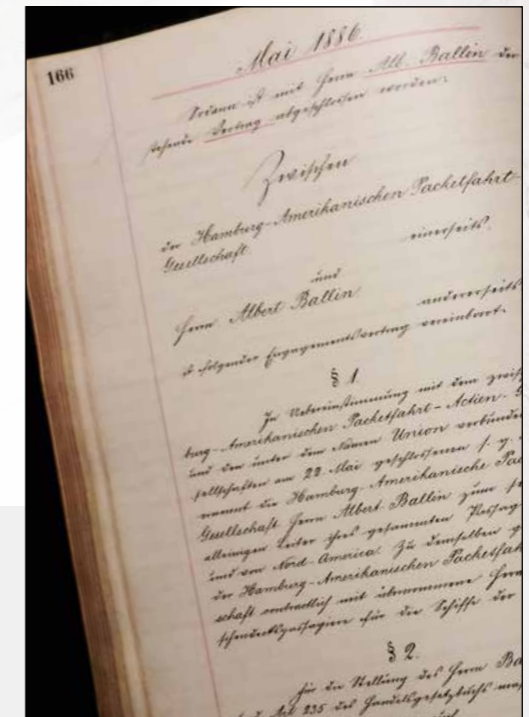


Ballin Hall, ground floor Ballindamm

# Albert Ballin – friend of the Kaiser and world-class shipper

The motto “Mein Feld ist die Welt” (The world is my playing field), written in large letters over the wide marble staircase leading to the upper Ballin Hall, was adopted by Albert Ballin, Director-General of Hapag, for his company around the turn of the century. It was a well-known slogan among Hanseatic merchants. At this time, Ballin could also look back proudly on his own unparalleled career: Born in Hamburg in 1857, he was the 13th child of a Jewish emigration agent of almost no means who had immigrated from Denmark. Although this was conceivably a poor starting point for a promising professional career, Ballin rose up to become the head of the world’s biggest shipping company – indeed, it was he who made Hapag the global number one. According to a later biography, he had risen up to become the “uncrowned king of his home city of Hamburg”. Ballin was a friend and adviser to Kaiser Wilhelm II, was respected by other shippers worldwide and on several occasions became an intermediary in ruinous rate wars.

In 1886, the young Albert Ballin took up a position at Hapag as head of the passenger department, having challenged the proud shipping company, together with another Hamburg shipping company, in a painful price war for passenger tickets to the New World. By 1899, he had already become the Director-General of Hapag. Ballin revolutionised passenger shipping by offering new, comfortable services and is also regarded as the pioneer of modern ship cruises.



1857

ALBERT BALLIN IS BORN IN HAMBURG

1874

DEATH OF HIS FATHER AND TAKEOVER OF HIS TICKET AGENCY

1886

HE JOINS HAPAG AS HEAD OF THE PASSENGER DEPARTMENT



Ballin Hall, lettering “MEIN FELD IST DIE WELT”, ground floor Ballindamm

## THE WAR TOOK HIS LIFE'S WORK FROM HIM

Under the leadership of this visionary entrepreneur, Hapag rode a wave of success. Its vessel tonnage exceeded the trading fleets of entire countries. The only serious competitor for the position as the world's most important shipping company at the time was NDL in Bremen. Later, the two former rivals became a single shipping company: In 1970, they merged to form Hapag-Lloyd AG. Before that happened, however, there were to be some deep ruptures.

One of them was the First World War. "The most stupid and bloodiest of all wars," pronounced Hapag head Albert Ballin from the start. Prior to the outbreak of the war, Ballin had for years been pressing for a German-British settlement and attempted to mediate discreetly again and again. Before the war and also during the catastrophe itself, he had warned and urged behind the scenes – in vain.

On 9 November 1918, just a few days before the war ended, Ballin died after taking a large quantity of sedatives. Although Ballin knew that this war had also destroyed his life's work, it is still unclear today whether there was suicidal intent. Hapag, as well as NDL, lost their fleets under the Treaty of Versailles.

1899

BALLIN BECOMES DIRECTOR-GENERAL

1888

APPOINTMENT TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD



Albert Ballin bust, Ballin Hall, ground floor Ballindamm

1918

FINAL RESTING PLACE  
OHLSDORF CEMETERY IN HAMBURG



# Worth seeing – objects from more than 175 years of shipping

On a tour around Ballin House, one encounters numerous historical objects and artworks that bear witness to more than 176-year history of Hapag-Lloyd AG.

## THE “HAMBURG EXPRESS”

Even before visitors entering Ballin House reach the reception desk in the entrance hall, their attention is drawn to a model of the “Hamburg Express” located there.

The “Hamburg Express” belongs to a series of twelve large container vessels to be put into service by Hapag-Lloyd from 2023 onwards. They are modern giants approximately 400 metres long and 61 metres wide, which can transport up to 23,660 standard containers (TEU) each and are among the biggest container vessels in the world.

In addition, they are the first Hapag-Lloyd new-builds that can be operated not just with conventional fuel but also with more environmentally friendly liquefied natural gas (LNG). When methane produced biologically or synthetically from renewable energies is used instead of LNG, the emissions are reduced even further by a significant degree. These vessels therefore represent a key milestone on the path towards a more sustainable shipping industry.



## STAIRWELL BY FRITZ HÖGER

The stairwell adjacent to Ballin Hall also bears Höger's signature. Although it is part of the old building completed in 1903, it was designed during the extension that was finished in the early 1920s and has the same style elements found in the hall, as is clearly evident from the handrails and ceiling ornamentations. By contrast, Haller's Alstertor stairwell, as it is known, conveys an idea of the architecture around the turn of the century with its classical elements.



## SHIP'S BELL OF THE SUNKEN "CIMBRIA"

On a marble plinth in the foyer of the entrance at 58 Ferdinandstrasse stands the bell of the Hapag steamer "Cimbria", which was rammed by a coal steamer on a foggy January night in 1883 off the coast of Borkum. It sank as a result, taking 400 people to their deaths. In 1974, the German research vessel "Wega" discovered the wreck. The ship's bell was meticulously restored at the Altona Museum and now serves as a memorial to all those who have lost their lives at sea.



## THE FIRST HAPAG STEAMERS

A painting by the Scottish artist William Clark shows Hapag's first two steamships, which it acquired in 1855. They bore the names "Hammonia" and "Borussia", were some 85 metres long, provided a capacity of 2,000 GRT and had a propulsion output of 1,400 hp.

Following its establishment, Hapag had initially used sailing vessels for its service to New York. Just a few years later, however, it took advantage of technological progress and, with this pair of steamers, began to build up a fleet solely comprised of steamships.



*Painting of the Hapag fleet by Peter Christian Holm, around 1864*

### THE COMPANY RESTAURANT – FIRST-CLASS MEALS

Located in the heart of the old building from 1903 was the handling hall for cabin passengers at the time of its inauguration. The hall's impressive dome was reminiscent of the lightwells found on transatlantic liners at the time. This is where the upper class of the empire came to purchase tickets for exclusive journeys as they viewed a monumental map of the world showing Hapag's route network. By contrast, the emigrants known as "steerage" got their tickets to America in a separate area that was accessed through the courtyard entrance at the rear of the building. Today, the dome hall, which has been almost completely preserved in its original condition, is the location of the Hapag-Lloyd company restaurant.

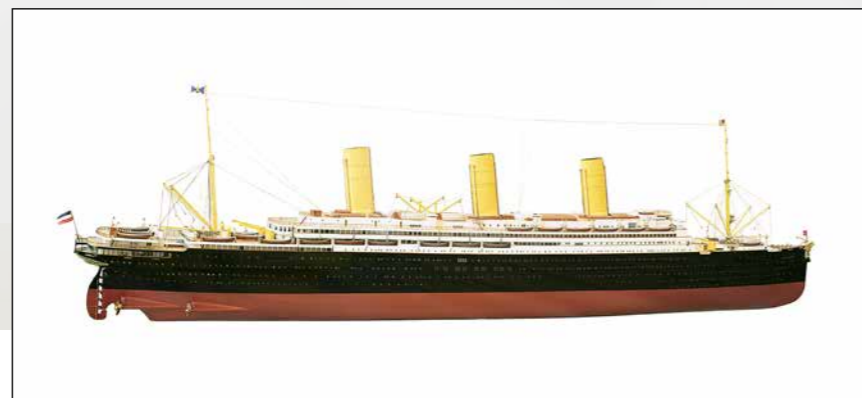


Gallery railing, dome hall, first floor

### THE "IMPERATOR"

A testament to the Ballin era is the large model of the steamer "Imperator". Built on a scale of 1:100 and in the style of the time, it is located on the first floor. Constructed in Hamburg, launched in 1912 and officially named by Kaiser Wilhelm II, the "Imperator" was 277 metres long and had a capacity of 52,117 GRT, making it the biggest ship in the world. With space for 4,200 passengers and 1,180 crew members, it resembled a floating city. Embellished with a powerful martial bronze eagle on its stern, the gigantic steamer from Hamburg was a floating status symbol of the emerging German Empire.

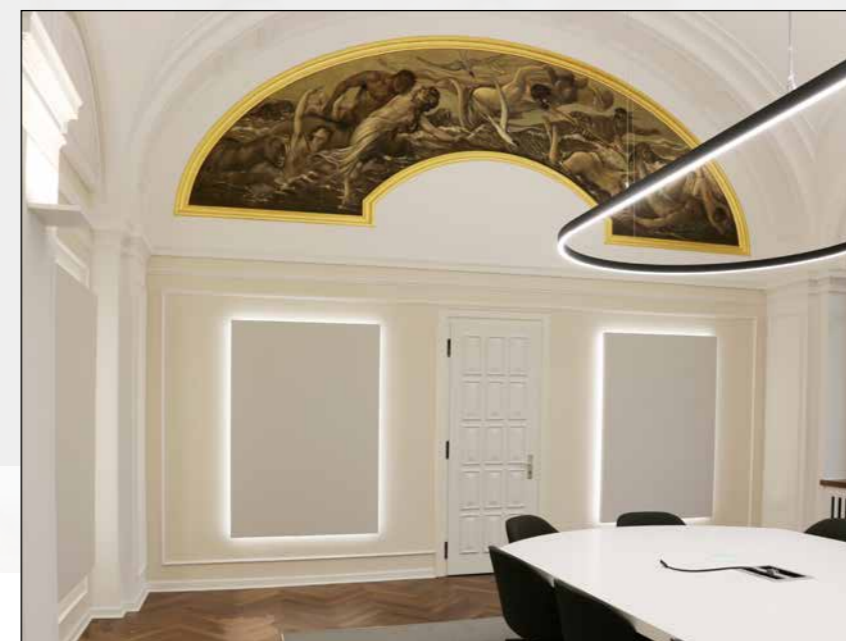
Directly beside the model is a printed longitudinal section of the "Imperator", also drawn on the same scale and in the style of the time. This drawing provides an interesting insight into the inner world of the gigantic vessel – from the boiler and engine rooms to the luxurious parlours and saloons of the cabin passengers to the mass quarters of the emigrants on the steerage deck.



### THE TWO FACES OF THE SEA – MURALS BY ARTHUR FITGER

The directors of Hapag had their offices on the Alster side of the old building, on the first floor. Opposite these was an antechamber, and parts of its representative design still exist today. This antechamber is dominated by two large murals by the Bremen artist Arthur Fitger, who also left his mark in Hamburg City Hall while working alongside Martin Haller.

In a symbolic portrayal, drawing from the mythology of antiquity, the paintings depict the calm sea as a basis for prosperity, on the one hand, and the tempestuously churned-up sea as a destructive force on the other. Having been used temporarily as a dining area for senior staff, today the antechamber serves as a conference room and is equipped with the latest communication technology.





## THE REAR ENTRANCE – A GEM WITH FINE DETAILS

The beautiful rear entrance and the rear façade of the Hapag building from 1903 at 58 Ferdinandstrasse are virtually unchanged from their original condition. They bear the coats of arms of various countries whose ports Hapag served. The large Hapag coat of arms over the garage entrance was added later, however. Before that, it graced the Company's children's home in Wyk on the island of Föhr, and originally the office house on Dovenfleet. At the rear entrance, there is also a bronze female figure which was previously enthroned on the roof of the historic "Verkehrspavillion" travel agency on the Inner Alster Lake lying perpendicular to the Ballindamm.



## EXHIBITION ON THE HISTORY OF HAPAG-LLOYD

The first floor of the dome hall has a circular gallery with a wrought iron railing incorporating HAPAG escutcheons.

The gallery not only provides an impressive view of the company restaurant below but is also the location of a permanent historical exhibition about Hapag-Lloyd AG and its predecessor companies.

In three different sections that complement each other, it provides visitors with information about the history of cargo shipping, passenger shipping and the Company's routes, and shows key development lines and milestones. Three screens, some of them interactive, offer more detailed content in the form of films, images and interviews with people at the time.

The gallery and exhibition are open to staff members and visitors to the building at all times.





Company plaque, Ballin House, Ballindamm

