

portable heater, the plaster took several days to dry thoroughly. There were no such problems for the sculptor Eric Gill and his assistant, Donald Potter, who were finishing carving the seahorses high above the hotel's main entrance and were nearly ready to begin work on the stone panel in the Lounge which was being fixed to the wall by workmen from Jenkins & Son.

As April slipped into May and the days lengthened, Goulding took stock of the position. On the positive side the structural work was essentially complete. The boilers were in and working; windows were glazed; the terrazzo flooring was laid and ready for polishing; plastering was well advanced; Tibbenham's had begun panelling although progress was slow; carpenters were hanging doors and fixing wardrobes; James Gibbons' men were assembling the staircase balustrade; Eric Ravilious had at last managed to make a start on the mural and Eric Gill was busy carving both the Lounge panel and the ceiling medallion. On the negative side Haden's were having problems with the pipe-work (Goulding blamed an incompetent foreman who was later sacked) while Bradford's – despite doubling their workforce – were a week behind schedule with the polishing of the render. The continued presence of their scaffolding was hampering other jobs, such as the laying of outside paving, and was a major worry for Goulding. The timescale was tight. With only two months to opening day it would be touch and go.

Meanwhile, Oliver Hill had calculated that the bulk of the furniture, curtains, linen, crockery and glassware needed to be delivered to the hotel in the third week of June by which time the building should be secure – a date which seemed rather optimistic considering he was still making changes to the configuration of the rooms and much of the furniture, especially the beds, had yet to be manufactured. This in itself appeared a somewhat odd process, with examples of box-mattresses being sent from LMS stores in Derby to Tibbenham's so that they could make the bedsteads, examples of which would then be sent back to Derby for the appropriate mattresses to be made!

Hill continued to concern himself with every minute detail of the new hotel, from the design of the clocks to the front door mats, from the shape of the hooks in the bedrooms to the letter rack in Reception. He was very particular about the number of cushions allowed in each room – 'four per sitting room in smooth silk material' – and the colour of the bedroom curtains which were to be 'mostly blue, some beige, all with buff linings', while a special 'Morecambe blue' was to be used for the waste and linen baskets and the pear-shaped bell-push. He also specified the number and type of all the different chairs to be supplied throughout the hotel, although Arthur Towle, still suspicious of some of Hill's ideas, insisted he be sent a chair to try personally as soon as one was available as he 'must be satisfied that all the easy chairs for the sitting rooms, bedrooms, lounges, etc are of the most comfortable type'.

On 23 May, Hill reported to the Rebuilding Committee that

the structure, grounds (including the new entrance drive) and the boundary walls were now generally complete and that all the finishing trades, that is to say, those

Two similar views, taken from the Winter Gardens but some 25 years apart.

Tram lines curve towards the original Midland Hotel with its many chimneys and shuttered windows. The adjacent building, once the hotel's stables, is occupied by Fahy's Garage. Part of the Winter Gardens' fairground can be seen bottom left while next to the road are a few stalls, probably serving refreshments. (Lancaster City Museum)



A gleaming new Midland Hotel dominates the seafront. Motor cars have replaced the horse-drawn carriages and a line of purpose-built kiosks (one selling postcards) has taken over from the ad-hoc arrangement of stalls. (Barry Guise)

