Date: 1928

Architects: Elcock C. Sutcliffe, with Thomas Tait.

Sculptors: A J Oakley, S Rabinovitch (the work of each unspecified).

Sculptures

1. Carved relief above the main (central) entrance [C] - two naked male figures of Mercury holding snake staffs, with abstract sunburst motif and map of British Isles behind [E].

2. Five raised relief panels above 1st floor level in the centres of the window openings, representing birds (?swallows or swifts) in flight [eg D].

3. Near the top level at the sides (above side entrances) - two relief semi-abstract mask-like heads surrounded with abstract 'lightning' panels, within an abstract surround [F-H].

The building, in Portland stone, shows much abstract decoration in stone all over the front of the building, as well as the use of bronze balconies and door and window frames, some of this decoration showing Egyptian influence. Pevsner refers to it in a quite derogatory way, describing it as "a building in which neo-Greco-Egyptian imitation has turned modernistic, with much fluting, fancy iron-work, and little to recommend it" (1973: 357). In contrast, however, I believe that it compares favourably with some of the contemporary Deco buildings in the USA, and is one of the finest examples of this style in London. The Architects Journal (Jan 14 1931, 73-81) sees it as setting "a new standard of scale and treatment of the modern constructional problem", and describes the decoration of "simple motifs of fluted and reeded bands in the main parapet", with "friezes and soffits with scalloped and triangular edges".

The imagery of flight, represented by Mercury and the flying birds, seems to symbolise the idea of the speedy transmission of news by the newspaper, although it also
has a more general reference to the concern of the times with speed and movement. The proposals published in the *Builder* describe the purpose of the sculpture over the main entrance door "to denote the innuence [sic] of the Daily Telegraph" - i.e. that it announces its function. This iconography is very close in conception to the imagery of the sculptures on the BBC building, representing in various ways the broadcasting of the air waves. The imagery of the heads, common in many different buildings, is a humanising touch to the exuberant but abstract decorative elements.

**Sources:**

*Builder*, Jan 11 1929; July 1930; Sept 1930; Nov 1930.

*Architects and Building News*, Dec 1930.

*Architects Journal*, Jan 14 1931; Feb 24 1932.