

Historical Topics Series: 1



R.M.S. Titanic

'If the circumstances under which the launch took place can be accepted as an augury of the future, the TITANIC should be a huge success...'

Belfast Newsletter, 1 June 1911

Such were the expectations held of the *R.M.S. TITANIC* as she prepared to sail the trans-Atlantic route from Southampton to New York, calling on route at Cherbourg in northern France and Queenstown (now Cobh) on the south coast of Ireland. The great liner, built by Harland and Wolff Ltd. at the Queen's Island shipyard in Belfast for the Oceanic Steam Navigation Company (commonly known as the White Star Line) was launched on 31 May 1911. Weighing in at 46,328 gross tons with a length of 852.5 foot she was, at the time, the largest ship ever built and considered practically unsinkable. Tragically, her maiden voyage, which began on 10 April 1912, was to end in disaster. On the night of 14 April at 11.40 p.m. *RMS TITANIC* struck an iceberg south of the Grand Banks. Less than three hours later, she sunk without trace. The captain, Edward V. Smith, went down with his ship, together with 1,503 passengers and crew. There were only 703 survivors. By the time *S.S. CARPATHIA* arrived at the scene of the disaster (at 4.10 a.m. on the morning of the 15th) there was only debris: a few deck chairs, some cork lifebelts and a body marked the spot where the great ship had gone down.

Belfast is justifiably proud of being the *TITANIC'S* birthplace. Interest in the *TITANIC* has never waned and, despite being one of the greatest maritime disasters of all time, and she is still considered by many to be the greatest ship ever built. Those wishing to see the plans and drawings of the *TITANIC* should visit the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Cultra, Co. Down. Records held in PRONI include:

- D1792/A3/3/18** Reference to the disaster in letter of Rev. J.B. Armour, 25 April 1912.
- D2460/42 A-C** Photographs of the *TITANIC* leaving Belfast, 1912.
- D2519/B/4** Press cuttings relating to T. Andrews Jnr., a list of those lost and saved, and an article entitled 'The Atlantic Hustlers' a reference to the race across the Atlantic by steam liners, 25 & 27 April 1912 (pp.35 & 125).
- D2519/F/7 A** Leaflet detailing the Memorial to the *TITANIC* erected in Donegall Square North, 26 June 1920.

D2863/2	Press cuttings relating to the <i>TITANIC</i> disaster, 1912.
D3655/A/6/2/1	Newspaper obituary for T. Andrews Jnr.
D3655/A/6/2/4	Letter of condolence to the mother of T. Andrews Jnr. from her niece, 25 April 1912.
D3661/5	Photograph of the <i>TITANIC</i> at anchor off [Co. Down?] coast, 1911.
D3661/6	A photograph of the First Class café/saloon on board <i>TITANIC</i> , 1911.
D3661/7	A photograph of T. Andrews Jnr., Managing Director of Harland and Wolff Ltd. with responsibility for the work of the design department during the construction of <i>TITANIC</i> , and a victim of the disaster.
D4022/A/1	Press cutting from the <i>Newry Reporter</i> on the entertainment held in Warrenpoint to raise money for the <i>TITANIC</i> Disaster Fund, 2 May 1912 (p.4).
MIC525	Registry of Shipping Papers relating to the <i>TITANIC</i> , including crew lists and agreements, lists of those on board indicating the fate of individuals, and the published report of the formal court investigation into the loss of the vessel, 1912.
TRANS/2A/45/ 381 A-E	Ships Agreements and Crew Lists for <i>TITANIC</i> , 1912.

Bibliography

The following books are available for consultation in the PRONI library

S. F. Bullock, *Thomas Andrews, Shipbuilder* (Dublin, 1912).

S. Cameron, *Titanic: Belfast's Own* (Dublin, 1998).

H. Jefferson, *Viscount Pirrie of Belfast* (London, 1960).

M. McCaughan, *Titanic* (Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, 1982).

M. Moss & J. R. Hume, *Shipbuilders to the World: 125 Years of Harland and Wolff, Belfast* (Belfast, 1986).

Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, *Titanic: a catalogue of photographic negatives held relating to RMS TITANIC*. (Also available in the Search Room)

[Belfast Titanic Society](#)

[The National Archives in London](#) also holds a wide range of material.

