

101 THINGS  
YOU THOUGHT  
YOU KNEW  
ABOUT THE  
TITANIC  
... BUT DIDN'T!



101 THINGS  
YOU THOUGHT  
YOU KNEW  
ABOUT THE  
TITANIC  
... BUT DIDN'T!

TIM MALTIN  
AND ELOISE ASTON



Wakefield  
Press

Wakefield Press  
1 The Parade West  
Kent Town  
South Australia 5067  
www.wakefieldpress.com.au

First published by Beautiful Books Ltd in 2010  
This edition published in Australia and New Zealand in 2010  
by arrangement with Beautiful Books Ltd, London UK

Copyright © Tim Maltin and Eloise Aston 2010

All rights reserved. This book is copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced without written permission. Enquiries should be addressed to the publisher.

Cover designed by Dean Lahn, Lahn Stafford Design  
Printed in Australia by Griffin Press, Adelaide

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry

Author: Maltin, Tim.  
Title: 101 things you thought you knew about the Titanic . . .  
but didn't/Tim Maltin and Eloise Aston.  
ISBN: 978 1 86254 923 4 (pbk.).  
Notes: Includes bibliographical references.  
Subjects: Titanic (Steamship)  
Titanic (Steamship) – Miscellanea.  
Shipwrecks – North Atlantic Ocean – History – 20th century.  
Other Authors/Contributors:  
Aston, Eloise.  
Dewey Number: 363.123091631



Arts SA



# Contents

Preface	1
Notes on the text	5

## *The Ship*

1 <i>Titanic</i> was the largest ship in the world in 1912.	7
2 <i>Titanic</i> was the fastest ship in the world in 1912.	8
3 <i>Titanic</i> was genuinely believed to be unsinkable.	9
4 <i>Titanic</i> was originally to have been named <i>Gigantic</i> .	13
5 <i>Titanic's</i> owners were trying to save money in her construction, causing them to cut corners on quality and safety.	14
6 Regulations stated that there should be enough lifeboats for everyone on board.	15
7 <i>Titanic's</i> owners opposed the addition of more lifeboats, in order to give passengers more room on the promenade decks.	19

## *Omens*

8 The <i>Titanic</i> disaster was predicted 14 years before it happened by writer Morgan Robertson.	23
9 Catholic workers at Harland & Wolff sabotaged <i>Titanic</i> because her hull number was 'anti-Catholic'.	24

- 10 A worker was accidentally sealed into *Titanic's* hull when she was under construction in Belfast. 25
- 11 *Titanic's* construction, launch and sailing were plagued by bad luck. 26
- 12 *Titanic* was sunk by a mummy's curse. 28

### *Maiden Voyage*

- 13 *Titanic* was filled to capacity on her maiden voyage. 31
- 14 *Titanic* was on fire when she left Southampton. 32
- 15 *Titanic* was carrying gold bullion. 37
- 16 *Titanic* nearly collided with another ship as she left Southampton. 39
- 17 Captain Smith was accident prone. 40
- 18 *Titanic* was trying to win the Blue Riband for the fastest Atlantic crossing. 43
- 19 *Titanic* was short of coal, because of a coal strike. 48
- 20 Owner Ismay acted as a 'super-captain' and ordered Captain Smith to maintain full speed despite the unusual ice warnings they had received. 49
- 21 *Titanic* was trying to take the shortest route to New York at the time of the accident. 54
- 22 Captain Smith should have slowed down for ice. 55
- 23 Crucial ice warnings never made it to *Titanic's* bridge because the wireless operator was too busy and tired. 58
- 24 Captain Smith was drunk at the time of the collision. 63

## *Passengers*

- 25 'Molly' Brown was treated with condescension by other First Class passengers because she was 'new money'. 65
- 26 Alice Cleaver, nursemaid to a family in First Class, had previously been convicted of killing her own child. 67
- 27 Two kidnapped children survived the sinking of the *Titanic*. 69
- 28 There were professional 'card-sharps' travelling on *Titanic* as First Class passengers. 70
- 29 Stewardess Violet Jessop survived the sinking of both the *Titanic* and her sister ship, the *Britannic*. 72
- 30 All eight members of the Goodwin family died in the sinking. 73

## *'Iceberg, right ahead!'*

- 31 'Keep a lookout for small ice' was a standing joke amongst *Titanic's* lookouts. 75
- 32 *Titanic's* lookouts could smell the ice that night. 77
- 33 If *Titanic's* lookouts had had binoculars, they'd have seen the iceberg earlier. 79
- 34 *Titanic* was going at the maximum speed she was capable of when she sighted the iceberg. 83
- 35 *Titanic's* engines were put in reverse just before the collision, making the ship less responsive to her helm, and compounding the accident. 85

36	If <i>Titanic</i> had been going more slowly, she could have turned more quickly.	86
37	<i>Titanic's</i> rudder was too small for her size, making her hard to turn.	87
38	Hard-a-starboard was the only helm order given to avoid the iceberg.	88
39	Captain Smith was in bed when <i>Titanic</i> collided with the iceberg.	93
40	<i>Titanic</i> collided with a lone iceberg.	97
41	<i>Titanic</i> struck a blue or dark iceberg.	100
42	If <i>Titanic</i> had carried searchlights, the lookouts would have seen the ice earlier.	104
43	The lookouts had reported seeing icebergs before the collision.	105
44	The iceberg which sank <i>Titanic</i> was identified the day after the sinking by a smear of red paint along its side.	106

### *Collision*

45	Everyone on board <i>Titanic</i> felt a terrific jolt as she collided with the iceberg.	109
46	Some Third Class passengers woke up to find their cabins awash.	111
47	Passengers used chunks of the iceberg in their drinks after the collision.	112
48	The iceberg ripped a 300 foot gash along the side of the ship.	114



- 49 The steel and rivets used to make *Titanic* were of inferior quality; if she'd been made with better metal, the iceberg wouldn't have sunk her. 117
- 50 If the bulkheads of *Titanic's* watertight compartments had been higher she wouldn't have sunk. 118
- 51 If *Titanic* had had longitudinal bulkheads, these would have contained the water and stopped the ship from sinking. 119
- 52 If *Titanic* had rammed the iceberg head-on, she would have survived. 121
- 53 Engineers and stokers were trapped below by the watertight doors as they came down after the collision. 125
- 54 *Titanic* sank more rapidly because her watertight doors were opened again after the collision. 128

## SOS

- 55 *Titanic* did not send a distress signal until 47 minutes after the collision. 133
- 56 *Titanic* was the first ship to use the distress signal SOS. 136
- 57 *Titanic's* distress signal gave the wrong position. 139
- 58 *Carpathia* was the first ship to pick up *Titanic's* distress signal. 141
- 59 The *Frankfurt*, 150 miles away, was told, 'You fool, standby and keep out', when she contacted *Titanic*. 143
- 60 *Titanic's* distress message was picked up on the roof of a New York department store. 146

## *The Californian Incident*

- 61 The *Californian* was about 20 miles away from the sinking *Titanic*. 151
- 62 The *Californian* saw *Titanic*'s distress signals, but ignored them. 153
- 63 There was a 'mystery ship' between the *Titanic* and the *Californian* which could have saved everyone, but it sailed away without responding to *Titanic*'s distress signals. 156
- 64 If the *Californian* had gone to help, everyone on the *Titanic* could have been saved. 159

## *Women and Children First*

- 65 Captain Smith had a mental breakdown following the collision, which rendered him ineffective. 163
- 66 *Titanic*'s passengers were reluctant to get into the lifeboats. 170
- 67 *Titanic*'s officers thought her lifeboats might break if they were lowered fully loaded. 172
- 68 *Titanic*'s second officer prevented men and even boys from entering boats even though there was space for them. 176
- 69 One man escaped by pretending to be a woman in order to get into a lifeboat. 178
- 70 *Titanic* developed a list to port when sinking and passengers were ordered to the starboard side to correct it. 180
- 71 *Titanic*'s First Officer allowed a lifeboat with a capacity of 40 to leave with only five passengers in it. 181

72 Third Class passengers were kept below as *Titanic* sank and were prevented from entering the lifeboats. 183

73 If *Titanic* had had more lifeboats, everybody could have been saved. 197

### *Final Moments*

74 Captain Smith advised those on board near the end to 'Be British'. 199

75 The band played *Nearer, My God, To Thee*, as the ship sank. 199

76 *Titanic's* Marconi operators knocked a stoker unconscious and left him to die. 206

77 Ismay pushed his way into Collapsible C, the last lifeboat to be launched on the starboard side. 208

78 *Titanic's* engineers died at their posts below decks. 217

79 *Titanic's* boilers exploded as she sank. 219

80 *Titanic* broke in half as she sank. 220

81 Colonel John Jacob Astor IV was crushed by a falling funnel as the ship sank. 232

82 First Officer Murdoch shot one or two passengers before shooting himself. 234

83 Captain Smith committed suicide as the ship went down. 243

84 Most *Titanic* victims drowned. 244

## *Rescue*

- 85 The *Carpathia* averaged 17.5 knots during her 58-mile dash to reach the *Titanic*. 247
- 86 Chief Baker Charles Joughin survived for several hours in the freezing water. 249
- 87 'Molly' Brown tried to make lifeboat number six go back to pick up survivors, but was prevented by Quartermaster Robert Hichens. 253
- 88 Many more people would have been saved if more lifeboats had attempted to return to pick up survivors from the water. 256
- 89 Sir Cosmo Duff Gordon offered those in Lifeboat number one £5 each if they would agree not to return to the ship to pick up survivors. 264
- 90 The barking of a Newfoundland dog alerted *Carpathia* to *Titanic's* lifeboats. 266
- 91 Operators on the *Carpathia* withheld information about *Titanic's* sinking in order to sell their story to the papers. 268

## *Statistics*

- 92 A higher percentage of Irish people died on the *Titanic* than any other nationality. 273
- 93a A higher percentage of Third Class men died than Second Class men. 273
- 93b More First Class men were saved than Third Class men. 274
- 93c A higher percentage of *Titanic's* male passengers were saved than crew. 274
- 93d More women were saved from the *Titanic* than men. 275

## *Aftermath*

94 Bodies of First and Second Class passengers were taken to Halifax for burial, but Third Class passengers were buried at sea.	277
95 One of <i>Titanic's</i> lifeboats was found drifting in the Atlantic a month after the sinking with the bodies of three victims still in it.	278
96 <i>Titanic</i> and her cargo were re-insured immediately after the disaster.	280
97 The ship that sank was actually the previously damaged <i>Olympic</i> in an insurance scam that went wrong.	282
98 Ismay developed a lifelong opiate addiction after the sinking and withdrew from society.	283
99 The British inquiry into the sinking was a whitewash.	286
100 RMS Titanic Inc. now owns the wreck.	292
101 The wreck of the <i>Titanic</i> may one day be raised.	293
Acknowledgements	297
Bibliography	299
Webliography	301



# Preface

Jack Thayer was only seventeen years old when he survived the sinking of the *Titanic* by swimming to an overturned lifeboat. His father died in the disaster and his rude awakening into adulthood no doubt coloured his perspective; but in his privately published 1940 account of the sinking, this is how Jack recalled what life was like before the *Titanic* sank:

‘There was peace and the world had an even tenor to its way. Nothing was revealed in the morning the trend of which was not known the night before. It seems to me that the disaster about to occur was the event that not only made the world rub its eyes and awake but woke it with a start keeping it moving at a rapidly accelerating pace ever since with less and less peace, satisfaction and happiness. To my mind the world of today awoke April 15th, 1912.’

The sinking of the *Titanic* on April 15th, 1912 was as shocking to the world as the destruction of the Twin Towers on September 11th, 2001. *Titanic* triggered the first global media storm, with *The New York Times* devoting its first twelve pages to the story: the newest, largest and most luxurious ship in the world, the unsinkable *Titanic*, packed

with many of the biggest celebrities of the day, had sunk on her maiden voyage, with catastrophic loss of life.

As soon as her survivors disembarked in New York from the rescue ship *Carpathia* and told their stories, the world began a game of Chinese Whispers about what really happened the night the *Titanic* sank. Each survivor only saw a small piece of the complete picture of what happened and the press in 1912 attempted to fill in the gaps as sensationally as possible. As a result, wild rumours developed, many of which still persist today.

The *Titanic* disaster was the subject of contemporary public inquiries on both sides of the Atlantic and is consequently one of the best-documented disasters in history. These Hearings corrected many of the rumours circulating at the time, but they also propagated new ones of their own. As *Titanic* passes into folklore, old myths persist and new ones continue to be created to suit the worldview of new generations—and cinema audiences. The result is that what most people know about *Titanic* today is a mixture of fact and fiction.

As Lord Byron said in his comic-epic poem, *Don Juan*, in 1823:

‘Tis strange,—but true; for truth is always strange;  
Stranger than fiction; if it could be told,  
How much would novels gain by the exchange!  
How differently the world would men behold!

This was never truer than in the case of *Titanic*. The difficulty however—as Byron points out—is how to tell it. I hope that



*101 Things You Thought You Knew About The Titanic*

the accessible format of this book will be a way in, for some, to discovering the truth about the *Titanic*. Where possible, I have tried to get at this through eye witness testimony, which is fully quoted and referenced.

As Walter Lord observed in both his classic 1957 account of the sinking, *A Night To Remember* and his 1986 sequel, *The Night Lives On*:

‘It is a rash man indeed who would set himself up as final arbiter on all that happened the incredible night the *Titanic* went down.’

This book is not intended as the final word on any of the 101 points it covers, but it is intended to make you think differently about the *Titanic*.

Tim Maltin, 15th April 2010



# Notes on the text

The US Inquiry, which began on 19th April, 1912 and finished on 25th May, 1912, numbered its questions by witness. For example, CHL100 is the 100th question asked to Charles Herbert Lightoller, *Titanic's* most senior surviving Officer.

The British Inquiry, which began on 2nd May, 1912 and finished on 3rd July, 1912, numbered its questions in simple chronological order, regardless of witness initials. For example, question number 16802 happens to be the first question asked to Charles Herbert Lightoller on the 14th day of that inquiry.

In May 1915 Limitation of Liability Hearings regarding the *Titanic* were held in the US, but these do not have numbered questions as the testimony itself has been lost, with only some witness depositions presently available.

Wherever this book quotes from the US or British Inquiries, I have included the official question number, so the reader may easily conduct his own research at [www.titanicinquiry.org](http://www.titanicinquiry.org).

Details of the author's forthcoming book *A Very Deceiving Night*, together with articles and other *Titanic* information and links, can be found at [www.averydeceivingnight.com](http://www.averydeceivingnight.com), where I also welcome your comments and questions on this book.



# The Ship

## I. TITANIC WAS THE LARGEST SHIP IN THE WORLD IN 1912.

Yes, but only just. *Titanic* was built to the same design as her slightly older twin sister, *Olympic*, launched about seven months before *Titanic* on 20th October, 1910. *Olympic*, *Titanic* and *Britannic*, the third sister of the *Olympic* Class trio, were all 882ft 9ins long. *Titanic* and her older sister *Olympic* were almost identical, the only visual difference being *Olympic*'s open A Deck promenade, which was later enclosed on *Titanic* and *Britannic*. However, *Titanic* also differed from *Olympic* in other small respects, including extended B Deck Staterooms and additional cabins, giving her a Gross Register Tonnage (GRT) of 46,328, only 1,204 GRT (or 2%) larger than *Olympic* at 45,124 GRT, but nonetheless just enough to give *Titanic* the title of largest liner in the world. However, *Olympic*, as the first in this new class of superliner, was 42% larger than the previous largest ship in the world, Cunard's *Mauretania*, at only 31,738 GRT.

For this reason, *Olympic*'s building and launch attracted much more public interest than *Titanic*'s.

*Olympic* was later to learn from the disaster which occurred to her younger sister, as after the *Titanic* sank, *Olympic* was withdrawn from service in order to increase her watertight protection and lifeboat provision. These modifications were

also built into the *Britannic*, which then became a slightly larger ship again at 48,158 GRT. *Olympic* outlived both her younger sisters, travelling at least 1.8 million miles during her eventful career and continuing in successful service until she was scrapped in 1935 following American restrictions on the emigrant trade and an increase in the popularity of travelling across the Atlantic by airplane.

## 2 TITANIC WAS THE FASTEST SHIP IN THE WORLD IN 1912.

No, the *Mauretania* and the *Lusitania*, built by Cunard in 1906, were both significantly faster than the *Olympic* and *Titanic*, whose owners, the White Star Line, had not tried to compete on speed since the *Oceanic II* was launched on January 14th, 1899. She and all subsequent White Star vessels were built for size and luxury, rather than speed. The *Mauretania* had a guaranteed service speed of no less than 24 knots, with a maximum recorded speed of 28 knots, and had since 1909 held the Blue Riband for the fastest westbound Atlantic crossing, a record which lasted for two decades. She had also broken the eastbound speed record in 1907, but only the westbound leg was counted for the Blue Riband. The *Lusitania* was slightly slower, but still had a guaranteed service speed of 24 knots, compared with the *Olympic*-class's designed service speed of 21.5 knots.

The *Olympic*-class ships were designed to be larger than their rivals to attract the emigrant trade, and also to attract the more wealthy with the comfort of the first and second

## 101 Things You Thought You Knew About The Titanic

class accommodation. White Star Line was able to offer a smoother passage for all classes, without the vibration that the Cunarders' quadruple screws gave at high speeds, achieving at the same time a significant economy of running costs, as fuel consumption was correspondingly lower. *Olympic* consumed about 650 tons of coal per twenty four hours with an average speed of 21.7 knots on her maiden voyage, compared to 1000 tons of coal per twenty four hours for both the *Lusitania* and *Mauretania*. Although they would not have noticed the saving in fuel, passengers did notice and appreciate how smooth *Olympic* and *Titanic* were.

### 3 TITANIC WAS GENUINELY BELIEVED TO BE UNSINKABLE.

Yes. As White Star Chairman and *Titanic* survivor Joseph Bruce Ismay confirmed at the British enquiry:

18755: 'I think the position was taken up that the ship was looked upon as practically unsinkable; she was looked upon as being a lifeboat in herself.'

This belief stemmed from *Titanic* being designed to float with any two of her watertight compartments flooded, or all of her forward three, as no-one could imagine anything worse than a breach of two compartments through a collision on a bulkhead, as happened in the *Olympic/Hawke* collision. The fact that no-one anticipated the glancing blow such as *Titanic* received from the iceberg, a blow which damaged the hull

along a 300ft area and breached six watertight compartments, is not surprising, as this type of side-swipe disaster had never occurred before in recorded maritime history.

This design feature led not only the White Star Line but also the well-respected trade journal *The Shipbuilder* to call *Titanic* ‘practically unsinkable’, a term also used to describe other large liners with watertight subdivisions, including Cunard’s *Mauretania*. In this extract from *The Shipbuilder*, the marvels of the Olympic-class’s watertight doors are extolled:

‘... so that in the event of accident, or at any time when it may be considered advisable, the captain can, by simply moving an electric switch, instantly close the doors throughout and make the vessel practically unsinkable.’

It is often said that no-one seriously believed the *Titanic* was unsinkable, and that the press created this myth in the aftermath of the disaster to highlight the ‘hubris’ of such reliance on man-made technology, But they really did believe that she was ‘practically unsinkable’. For example, *Titanic* survivor Elmer Taylor, heard Captain Smith explaining on *Titanic*’s maiden voyage that the ship could be ‘cut crosswise into three pieces and each piece would float’, a remark which confirmed Taylor’s belief in the safety of the ship. Captain Smith probably got this information from Thomas Andrews, Managing Director of *Titanic*’s builders. Andrews was travelling on *Titanic* on her maiden voyage and, as was reported on April 29th, 1912: