



Above: Titanic departing Southampton, 10 April 1912. (Author's Collection.)

# RMS *Titanic* Data Sheet for Media Inquiries

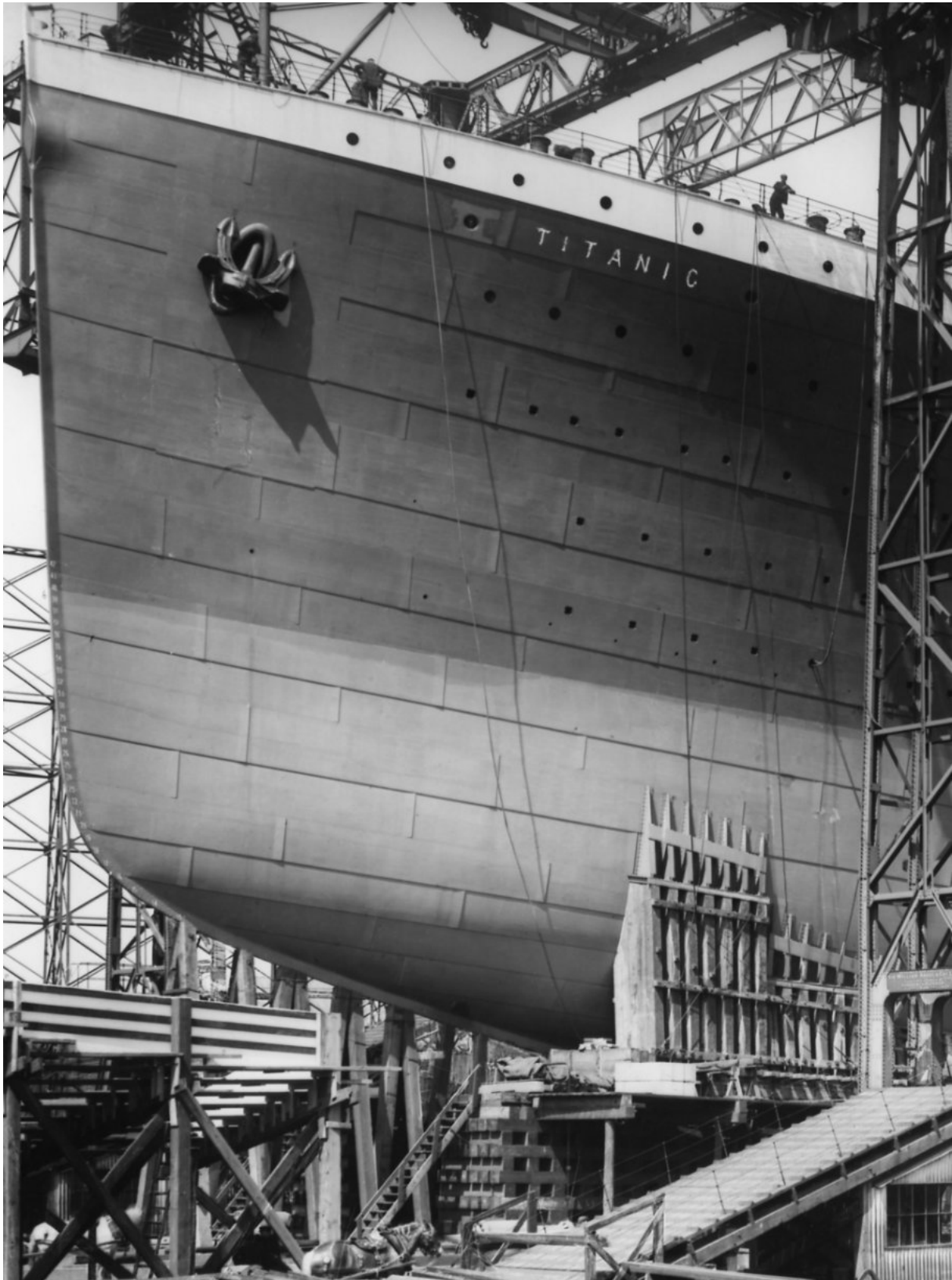
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## Basic story and background:

The RMS (Royal Mail Ship) *Titanic* was one of three sister ships built by Harland & Wolff for the White Star Line. The first ship, RMS *Olympic*, entered service in June 1911 and was retired in April 1935, subsequently being scrapped. The third ship, *Britannic*, entered service as a hospital ship during World War One and was sunk in the Aegean Sea on 21 November 1916, with the loss of 30 lives.

The White Star Line was a British-owned company founded in 1867 by Thomas Henry Ismay. Their first ship, *Oceanic*, entered service in 1870. In 1902, the company was sold by T. H.

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RMS Titanic Basic Details:	
<b>Built by:</b>	Harland & Wolff shipyard, Belfast, Ireland (now Northern Ireland/UK)
<b>Launched:</b>	May 31, 1911
<b>Maiden Voyage Route:</b>	Southampton, England / Queenstown (Cobh), Ireland / New York (trans-Atlantic route approximately 2,891 nautical miles)
<b>Designed Service Speed:</b>	21 knots (higher speed capable)
<b>Length Overall:</b>	882 ft 9 in
<b>Breadth:</b>	92 ft 6 in
<b>Displacement (weight)</b>	52,310 tons (Imperial tons, 2,240 lbs each) at 34 ft 7 in draft <sup>1</sup>
<b>Gross Registered Tonnage:</b>	46,328.54
<b>Souls on board during trans-Atlantic crossing:</b>	<b>2,208</b>
<b>Number killed in the disaster:</b>	<b>1,496<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Survivors:</b>	<b>712</b>
<b>Maiden voyage:</b>	Wednesday, 10 April 1912 - Sunday/Monday morning, 14-15 April 1912
<b>Time to sink from collision:</b>	Approximately 2 hours and 40 minutes (11:40 p.m. - 2:20 a.m. shipboard time)
<b>Time difference, Titanic's shipboard clocks to shore:</b>	2 hours 2 minutes ahead of New York time, 2 hours 58 minutes behind GMT

<sup>1</sup>Gross registered tonnage is a measurement of enclosed volume, not weight. The displacement figure cited just previously is a measurement of weight. A ship's weight (and thus her draft) changed continually during a crossing from heavy at sailing to a light condition, largely depleted of fuel and stores, toward the end of a voyage.

<sup>2</sup>These numbers supersede older and less reliable figures that are commonly circulated, including the oft-repeated 'over 1,500 died' quote. The numbers have been established by three separate researchers and over a period of 10-20 years have proved to be 'unbreakable' by those who prefer more common figures.

*Opposite page: Titanic on the stocks at Harland & Wolff, shortly before launch. (Author's Collection.)*

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Ismay's son Joseph Bruce Ismay to American financier J. P. Morgan. Morgan rolled the White Star Line into his growing International Mercantile Marine (IMM) group of shipping companies. Bruce Ismay had quickly taken a position as President of the IMM in addition to running White Star Line directly.

The IMM group eventually failed. White Star Line came under new ownership when it left IMM, but the firm was plagued by fraud and financial mismanagement. White Star was eventually merged with the Cunard Line, its longtime competitor, as a result of financial reverses during the Great Depression; once the two companies merged, it was known as the Cunard-White Star Line.

*Titanic's* wreck was discovered in the early morning hours of 1 September 1985 by a joint US/French expedition from Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute (WHOI) and IFREMER. It was led by Dr. Robert Ballard (WHOI) and Jean-Louis Michel (IFREMER).

Beginning in the summer of 1986, expeditions have made dozens of manned trips to the seafloor to visit the wreck using a variety of submersibles. These included the *Alvin* (WHOI), *Nautilus* (IFREMER), and perhaps most famously, the twin Russian submersibles *Mir 1* and *Mir 2*. These were the submersibles shown in the James Cameron film *Titanic*. As of early 2023, no lives had been lost exploring *Titanic's* wreck site. Beginning in 1987, hundreds of artifacts have been recovered from the seafloor, many of which have ended up in traveling and permanent museum exhibits; these salvage efforts, however, have proven very controversial for those who consider the wreck to be a grave site that should remain undisturbed. The data learned in the course of these investigations, however, has been very useful to historians. We have learned much about the ship herself, the way she sank, and even some of the personal stories of those involved in the maiden voyage and sinking.

### Common misconceptions & conspiracy theories:

#### **How Many Were Aboard *Titanic*? How Many Lived and Died?**

When *Titanic* left Queenstown on 11 April 1912, she carried 2,208 passengers and crew. Of this number, 1,496 perished in the sinking, and 712 survived. Although it is often said that 'over 1,500 died' when *Titanic* sank, this is a misnomer based on old research. The oft-cited number of survivors, namely 705, is also incorrect.

The preceding numbers – 2,208, 1,496, and 712 – were reached by no fewer than *three* independent analyses during the past 20 years. Although many proponents of numbers reached in older analyses do not like the newer numbers, they have never been able to disprove them.

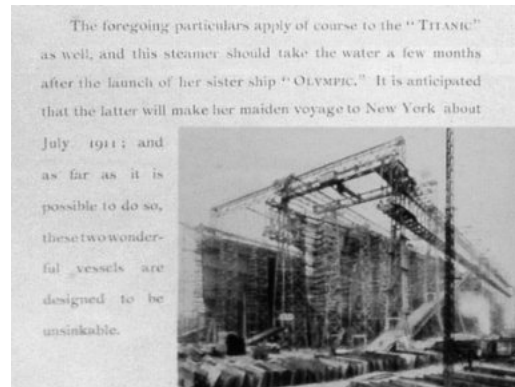
#### **'Unsinkable'?**

It has often been said that the White Star Line claimed that *Titanic* was 'unsinkable'. This is a gross oversimplification. Period journals of the time did refer to *Olympic* and *Titanic* as 'practically unsinkable'; however, these same journals had also claimed that Cunard's

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*Lusitania* and *Mauretania* (which entered service four to five years before *Titanic*) were 'unsinkable' (no qualifying word).

White Star did, in print, state that 'as far as it is possible to do so' *Olympic* and *Titanic* were 'designed to be unsinkable'. (See booklet at **right**, Jonathan Smith Collection, as seen in the book *On a Sea of Glass: The Life & Loss of the RMS Titanic*). Yet it must be pointed out that this printed claim was not absolute, and retained qualifying language.



However, it is oft-recounted that White Star Line personnel and ticketing agents *verbally* referred to *Titanic* as simply being 'unsinkable' when speaking with prospective passengers. Even so, these statements reflected the mentality of the time regarding crack liners rather than being a unique claim applicable solely to *Titanic* or her sister ships.

### **Poor Construction Materials, Pinching Pennies, & Corner-Cutting?**

*Titanic* and her sisters were not deliberately built to a poor standard or from sub-par materials in an attempt to cut costs and corners during construction. Many allegations on this subject have been made over the years, particularly in the media and social media, but these have been largely disproven by historians and researchers.

The quality of design and construction in both *Olympic* and *Titanic* was supervised by on-site surveyors from the British Board of Trade, who ensured that the ships met stringent standards. Although *Titanic* was not a perfect ship, her design met or exceeded all standards then in effect for watertight subdivision, quality of materials, and lifesaving apparatus such as lifeboats. During the remainder of *Olympic's* long career on the North Atlantic, she proved to be a very strong and safe liner, and suffered comparatively fewer issues from aging materials than other comparable liners.

In fact, *Titanic's* design of watertight subdivision was superior in many ways to other ships of the day such as *Lusitania* and *Mauretania*; the way she sank actually proved the ship's great strength, as she provided a stable platform from which to launch 18 of her 20 lifeboats safely before she sank. *Titanic's* watertight subdivision would, in fact, meet or nearly meet modern SOLAS requirements for watertight subdivision.

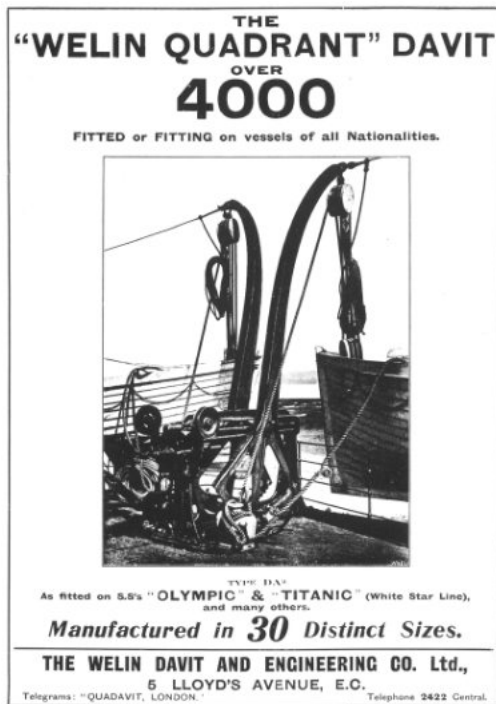
### **Did J. P. Morgan 'Bankroll' *Olympic* & *Titanic*?**

No. Although J P Morgan owned IMM, and in turn the White Star Line, Morgan did not fund construction of the *Olympic*-class liners. White Star funded the construction themselves by issuing bonds backed by the value of their existing fleet at the time. Morgan thus had no control in forcing any 'cost-saving measures' during the construction of the two ships.

### **Not Enough Lifeboats – Unusual for the Period?**

White Star and Harland & Wolff personnel had made preparations to increase the number of lifeboats *Olympic* and *Titanic* carried *if* government regulations were revised prior to *Titanic's*

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*Left: The Welin Quadrant davits had been specifically designed to easily and quickly accommodate extra lifeboats if the British Board of Trade regulations changed before Titanic's maiden voyage. The changes to the regulations never came. (Author's Collection.)*

maiden voyage. In the end, the government committee overseeing the subject decided to let the current regulations stand.

It is important to note that virtually all major ships on the North Atlantic in April 1912 carried lifeboats for only a fraction of their certified capacity of passengers and crew. This was not a factor unique to *Olympic* and *Titanic*. It was not evidence of cost-saving, or of simply wanting extra deck space for passengers.

Additionally: extra lifeboats would not necessarily have resulted in the saving of more lives aboard *Titanic*. As it was, the ship's crew had time only to launch 18 of her 20 lifeboats successfully before the ship sank out from underneath them. It is doubtful that they would have had the ability to launch more lifeboats under the circumstances they were presented with on the night in question. Whether any more extra lifeboats that had floated from the ship as it sank, possibly damaged in the process, would subsequently have been at all useful for saving lives in the frigid seas that night is highly debatable.

### **No Boat Drill: From Overconfidence?**

It is often pointed out that there were no lifeboat drills carried out aboard *Titanic*. In point of fact, *Titanic* had a lifeboat test carried out in Southampton before departure on 10 April 1912; two lifeboats (Nos. 11 & 13) were uncovered, swung out, and lowered to the deck. A junior officer and eight crewmen were placed into each boat; they were then lowered to the water and rowed around the waterfront. The drill was carried out under the watchful eye of a Board of Trade representative who was responsible for clearing the ship from port.

It was not unusual for White Star liners to have an at-sea lifeboat drill, as well. One was scheduled aboard *Titanic* for the morning of Sunday, April 14. However, it was testified that the drill was canceled due to risks from high winds.

Nevertheless, the officers had created and posted a list for what crewmen were assigned to what lifeboats in the event of an emergency. The crewmembers were aware of the lists and most knew their assigned lifeboats. The officers and crew were also well trained in how to respond during emergency situations.

Modern lifeboat drills carried out aboard cruise ships that involve all passengers donning lifejackets and assembling at muster stations before sailing were unheard of in *Titanic's* day.

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In fact, these regulations largely stem from the *Titanic* and other maritime disasters that have taken place since 1912.

### ***Titanic*: The World's Largest Ship?**

Although *Titanic* was technically the world's largest ship at the time of her sinking, her dimensions and weight were a dead match to her slightly older sister *Olympic*; a few modifications to *Titanic* improved her functionality and comforts for some of her passengers. This allowed her gross registered tonnage to be measured at a figure slightly higher than her sister's figure, due to the complex ways that internal volume and deductions for how certain spaces were used were calculated at the time. In short: it was an on-paper advantage. In fact, their sizes were so similar that when *Olympic* was later modified to incorporate many of *Titanic*'s upgrades, her gross registered tonnage actually came to exceed *Titanic*'s.

### ***Titanic*: A Crippling Financial Blow White Star Never Recovered From?**

The loss of *Titanic* and subsequently of *Britannic* did not put the White Star Line into financial distress that eventually led to the company's demise. This took place later on, when the company was sold back to British interests during the 1920s under the oversight of Lord Kysant. Kysant was subsequently imprisoned for financial wrongdoing and his mismanagement of company funds. Thus, when the Great Depression began in late 1929, the White Star Line was already in a weakened position from which to cope with the worldwide financial crisis.

### **Was *Titanic* Trying to Take The Blue Riband?**

No. *Titanic* was not trying to take the trans-Atlantic Blue Riband for the fastest crossing during her maiden voyage. That prize then rested with Cunard's *Mauretania*, and the *Olympic*-class liners were not designed to achieve speeds approaching the Cunarder's.

### **Why Did They Sail At Top Speed Into Ice-Infested Waters?**

Surprisingly, sailing at top or high speed at night through iceberg-infested waters was not unusual at the time; many other liners belonging to various shipping companies did the same thing both *before and after* *Titanic* sank. It was considered that good lookouts and quick evasive action by the officers in charge would prevent such situations. Iceberg collision events were still rare in spite of this. It was a case of everyone thinking that they could 'get away with' what had become a standard operating procedure on the North Atlantic. Sadly, it was also a game of Russian roulette, and the numbers came up in *Titanic*'s case.

### **Did *Titanic* Send the First SOS?**

No.

### **Were *Olympic* & *Titanic*: Switched?**

No. *Titanic* was not switched with her sister ship *Olympic* and deliberately sunk as part of a conspiracy for insurance fraud. There were too many differences between the two ships to have carried this switch out in such a short time. Specific *Olympic*-only features (particularly

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*Above: This photo was taken when Olympic arrived in New York on April 10, 1912. The photo clearly shows her Enclosed Promenade on B Deck, a feature Titanic never had, as this same space on Titanic had new suites of First Class accommodations. Also note the open Promenade on A Deck above; Titanic's forward A Deck promenades were enclosed with windows. (Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division/Author's Collection)*

her Enclosed Promenades on B Deck) were still in evidence at the time of *Titanic's* sinking, as evidenced by photos showing *Olympic* arriving in New York on April 10, 1912.

### **Silencing Opposition to the US Federal Reserve?**

*Titanic* was not deliberately sunk to kill Benjamin Guggenheim, John Jacob Astor IV, and Isidor Straus, men who were allegedly opposed to the creation of the US Federal Reserve. In fact, period news articles indicate that not all of these men were opposed to the concept, and at least one was said to have been in favor of it.

All three of these men were alive and were seen during the sinking. Guggenheim and Straus made personal decisions to stay behind aboard the ship during the disaster of their own volition. Second Officer Lightoller did refuse to allow Astor to board Boat No. 4 with his wife, but Lightoller had maintained a similar policy of refusing to allow any men into lifeboats, interpreting the rule of 'women and children first' to mean something more like 'women and



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children only'. He only allowed men into the boats that he loaded when they were needed for manning the craft.

### **The Coal Bunker Fire.**

In spite of recent media claims, *Titanic* did not sink because of a coal bunker fire. Such fires were not unusual at the time, and the fire had been extinguished well before the collision.

### **Too Small a Rudder?**

*Titanic* did not strike the iceberg because her rudder was too small and she suffered from some handicap of maneuverability. Even by the most modern of standards, the underwater surface of her rudder in relation to the size of the underwater surfaces of her hull, as well as her known turning characteristics, would be considered acceptable for obtaining certificates of seaworthiness.

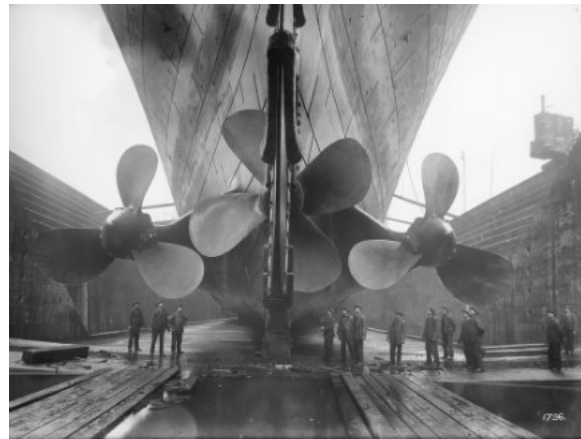
### **Was the Collision Because of Bungled Evasive Action?**

*Titanic* did not strike the iceberg because the Officer of the Watch, First Officer William M. Murdoch, 'bungled' the collision avoidance maneuver. Nor did *Titanic's* helmsman, Quartermaster Robert Hitchens turn the wheel the wrong way when ordered to take evasive action; these are latter-day myths perpetuated by sensationalism, rumours, and badly-researched books and 'documentaries'.

### **Is This Photo (see right) of Titanic?**

No, this is the perhaps the most-frequently miscaptioned photo in *Titanic* lore. This photo was taken of *Olympic* on January 29, 1924. While *Olympic* sported a four-bladed centre propeller, it has been learned in the past ten years that Harland & Wolff had installed a three-bladed centre propeller aboard *Titanic*, likely in order to test efficiency.

Propeller design was a constantly-evolving science back then, and props were frequently changed on many large and fast ships. It is also known that Harland & Wolff initially made engineering drawings for *Britannic* that showed a three-bladed centre propeller, and that *Olympic* sported one briefly, but that she returned to a four-bladed centre propeller design before *Britannic* had even entered service; *Britannic* was also fitted with a four-bladed centre prop, as well. Apparently the three-bladed prop idea had not proved as effective as hoped.



Above: *Olympic* in drydock, January 29, 1924. One of the most often miscaptioned photos in the historical record. (Jonathan Smith Collection, as seen in *On a Sea of Glass: The Life & Loss of the RMS Titanic*)

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Above: Titanic settles into the sea shortly after 2:00 a.m. on the morning of 15 April 1912 .  
(Still from the 2021 HFX Studios' real-time sinking animation, as seen in the book *Recreating Titanic and Her Sisters: A Visual History*)

### Recommended Reading:

- *On a Sea of Glass: The Life & Loss of the RMS Titanic*, by Tad Fitch, J. Kent Layton, & Bill Wormstedt  
(Third Edition 2015, Amberley Books)
- *Recreating Titanic and Her Sisters: A Visual History*, by Tad Fitch, J. Kent Layton, & Bill Wormstedt  
(First Edition 2022, The History Press)
- *Titanic: Solving the Mysteries*, by Mark Chirnside, Tad Fitch, Ioannis Georgiou, Steve Hall, Samuel Halpern, J. Kent Layton, and Bill Wormstedt  
(2019, Blurb Books)
- *The Titanic Expeditions: Diving to the Queen of the Deep: 1985-2021*, by Eugene Nesmeyanov  
(Second Edition 2022, The History Press)
- *Exploring the Deep: The Titanic Expeditions*, James Cameron  
(Insight Editions)

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### Multimedia Resources:

- [“Titanic Sinks in Real-Time \(Historian Edition\) \(based on the book ‘On a Sea of Glass’\)”](#) by HFX Studios (animation prepared to the specifications of *On a Sea of Glass* authors Tad Fitch, J. Kent Layton, and Bill Wormstedt).

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