

People

The story of Titanic is more than an account of engineering excellence. It is a story of human endeavour, ambition and courage. Here you will find out more about some of the people who played their part in this story.

Lord Pirrie, Chairman of Harland & Wolff Ltd.

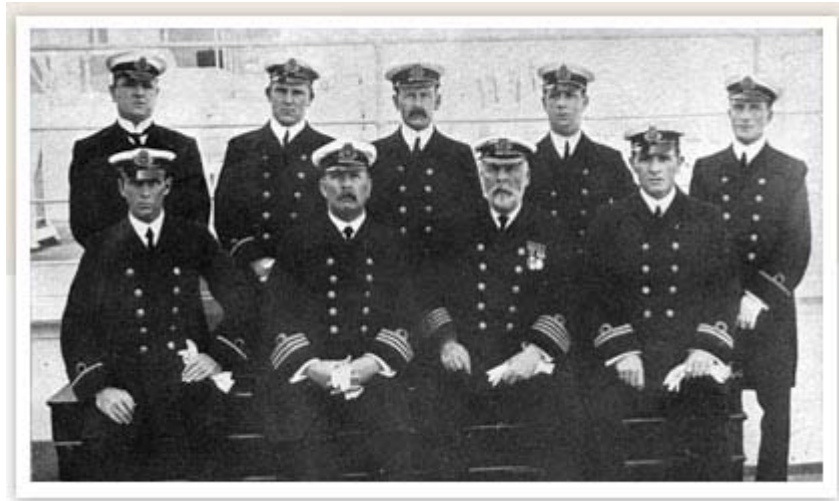


Lord Pirrie, Chairman of Harland & Wolff Ltd.

Brought up in Belfast, William James Pirrie (1847-1924) was a strong-willed international businessman. As well as being Chairman of Harland & Wolff, he was also a director of White Star Line and a director of the huge American shipping company, International Mercantile Marine, known as IMM, which in turn owned White Star from 1902 to 1927. Pirrie's aim was to promote Harland & Wolff as shipbuilder to all the shipping lines owned by IMM.

Pirrie joined Harland & Wolff as a 'gentleman apprentice' in 1862, aged 15 years. An excellent draughtsman, he was made a partner in 1874 at the age of 27. When Harland died in 1894 he became Chairman of the company, a role he held until his death in 1924.

Titanic's officers



Captain Edward J Smith and his senior officers photographed on board Titanic, April 1912.

Back row from Left to Right:

Herbert McElroy, Charles Lightoller, Herbert Pitman, Joseph Boxhall, Harold Lowe

Front row from Left to Right:

James Moody, Henry Wilde, Edward Smith, William Murdoch

In 1907, when Captain Smith took command of the ship, *Adriatic*, on her maiden trip, he said these prophetic words:

" I never saw a wreck and have never been wrecked, nor was I ever in any predicament that threatened to end in disaster of any sort.....I will say that I cannot imagine any condition which could cause a ship to founder. I cannot conceive of any vital disaster happening to this vessel. Modern shipbuilding has gone beyond that."

Thomas Andrews, Harland & Wolff's chief designer



Thomas Andrews was Harland & Wolff's chief designer, a nephew of Lord Pirrie and a managing director of the company.

Thomas Andrews was the nephew of William James Pirrie, the Chairman of Harland and Wolff. In 1889, at the age of 16, he left school to begin his apprenticeship at Harland & Wolff in Belfast. In

1907 he became Managing Director and head of the draughting department. When the White Star Line commissioned the company to build three new liners, Olympic, Titanic and Britannic, their design was completed under Andrews's watchful supervision at the Harland & Wolff Drawing Offices.

Andrews was well-liked by both the workers and management of the company. He headed Harland and Wolff's 'Guarantee Group', a group of engineering specialists who would accompany each vessel on its maiden voyage to see that all went well. It was while acting in this capacity that Andrews was on board the Titanic in April 1912, as she set sail from Southampton, bound for New York.

When Titanic struck an iceberg at 11.40pm on Sunday 14 April, 1912, Andrews conducted a rapid tour of the ship to assess the damage. Once the order was given to start filling lifeboats, Andrews spent his remaining time ensuring the survival of the passengers. He went down with the ship. In this iconic 1911 photograph Andrews is wearing his everyday working suit and is holding folded plans, possibly of the great ship in which he perished.

Shipyard workers 1912



Shipyard workers going home from Queen's Island, May 1911.

In this busy photograph, electric trams are crowded with workers, bound for parts of Belfast beyond walking distance. In the right foreground a barefoot boy is selling newspapers, while in the background Titanic is almost ready for launching.

At this time H&W had a workforce of 15,000, of which over 3,000 were employed in the construction of Titanic. The bow of the White Star tender Nomadic can be seen on the left of the photograph. Nomadic was built to ferry passengers and freight to and from the liners Olympic and Titanic when they called at Cherbourg. Amazingly, this historic element of the Titanic story has survived to present day, despite years of neglect. Brought from France to Belfast for restoration in July 2006, Nomadic is being restored to her original 1911 state. She will be used as an exhibition centre telling the story of shipbuilding in Belfast and as a conference venue.

Bruce Ismay, Chairman and Managing Director of the White Star Line



Bruce Ismay, Chairman and Managing Director of the White Star Line.

Joseph Bruce Ismay (1862-1937) was an English businessman who served as chairman and managing director of the White Star Line of steamships. He was instrumental in commissioning the design and build of White Star's three Olympic-class liners, Olympic, Titanic and Britannic. He sailed on Titanic's maiden voyage and came to international attention as the highest-ranking White Star official to survive the disaster.

White Star was formed in Liverpool in 1869. The company had a long and close business relationship with Harland & Wolff. Prior to the First World War all White Star ships, with one exception, were built in Belfast.