

United States Senate Inquiry

Day 7

Testimony of Edward Wheelton

Source : <http://www.titanicinquiry.org/USInq/AmInq01Indx2a.php>

(The witness was duly sworn by Senator Newlands.)

Senator NEWLANDS.
What is your age and occupation?

Mr. WHEELTON.
Twenty-eight years of age. I have been with the White Star six years, as first class steward.

Senator NEWLANDS.
Go on, and in your own way state what occurred on the steamer [Titanic](#) after the collision with the iceberg?

Mr. WHEELTON.
I had just come off watch. I went to bed. I was awakened between 10 minutes to 12 and a quarter to 12 by a shock. It felt as if it was the dropping of a propeller or something like that. I got out of bed. I lifted the port and I looked out of the port. Everything was calm. It was very cold. I went to the door of my room and spoke to some of the men, and then I got back into bed again. I was roused next by some one shouting, "watertight doors." I came outside. The order was, "Get your lifebelts. Get up to boat stations." I went back. I put my pants on over my pajamas, put my slippers on, and my overcoat. I went down to the deck. They were just getting away [No. 5](#) then. I assisted in getting away lifeboat No. 5. I was ordered to the storeroom. I went down to the storeroom. The way I went to the storeroom was down [B deck](#), along B deck. As I went along B deck I met [Mr. Andrews](#), the builder, who was opening the rooms and looking in to see if there was anyone in, and closing the doors again. I went along B deck and used what we call the accommodation staircase, which goes through the ship, and is used by the stewards. I went down to the storeroom and I got a bottle of biscuits, and I carried them up to the main dining room, through the reception room, up the main staircase. I got onto the deck; the boats had gone. They were working at [No. 7](#). I meant No. 5 had gone. I went to No. 7 and assisted in lowering No. 7. I think it was No. 7.

[Mr. Lowe](#) told [Mr. Ismay](#) to get to hell out of it, because I was the steward who stood back of Mr. Lowe. We worked at No. 7 and got her down, and then [No. 9](#). [Mr. Murdoch](#) was there, and Mr. Ismay stood up by all of the boats I saw get away. I walked along when No. 9 went, and Mr. Murdoch, the first officer, turned around. He sent the assistant second steward down to [A deck](#), and he said to me "You go, too." He got hold of me by the left arm and he said, "You go, too." We went down to A deck. [Number 11](#) boat was hanging in the davits. We got into the boat. Mr. Murdoch shouted "Women and children first." He was on the top deck then, standing by the taffrail. We loaded the boat with women and children, and took in a few of the crew. I think there were about - well, there were eight or nine men in the boat, all together. That was including our crew. I think there were one or two passengers, but I really could not say.

I shouted to Mr. Murdoch, "The boat is full, sir." He said, "All right." He said, "Have you got your sailors in?" I said, "no, sir." He told two sailors to jump into the boat. We lowered away. Everything went very nice, very smoothly, until we touched the water. We pushed away from the ship's side and had just a slight difficulty in hoisting the afterblock. We were not there a minute. The sailor got at the block and loosened the tackle. We pulled away from the ship. We pulled away until we were about 300 yards away from the ship. I looked around into the boat. I saw the boat was pretty well crowded, because I had some little difficulty in rowing, because the passengers were so close together, and I kept hitting my hands against the passengers. We bent to our oars until the ship eventually went down.

We rowed around and tried to get to the other boats, to get close to them. We pulled toward a light, but we did not seem to get any closer to it, until daybreak. A lady back of me complained of the cold, and I took my coat off and gave it to her. We sighted the [Carpathia](#) and put the boat about and pulled toward her. We got alongside the [Carpathia](#) and I made the rope fast on the offside of the lifeboat. That was hanging from the [Carpathia](#), that rope, and I stood by until the boat was unloaded and the officer shouted "Come up."

Senator NEWLANDS.
How many boats did you see loaded?

- 14 Mr. WHEELTON.
They were lowering No. 5 when I left to go to the storeroom, and I saw No. 7 and No. 9. I went away in No. 11, sir.
- 15 Senator NEWLANDS.
What was Mr. Ismay doing?
- 16 Mr. WHEELTON.
He was standing aft, sir (Mr. Murdoch was standing forward), and he was going like this (*indicating*), "Lower, lower, lower," lowering the boats.
- 17 Senator NEWLANDS.
Who was?
- 18 Mr. WHEELTON.
Mr. Ismay, sir. He stood right by the davit with one hand on the davit and one hand in motion to the officer lowering.
- 19 Senator NEWLANDS.
Why was he motioning to the officer?
- 20 Mr. WHEELTON.
That was to let him know how far he wanted him to go. If you are lowering cargo or anything else - stores or anything else - that motion of the hand means to lower, and if the man stops making that motion with his hand that means to stop lowering.
- 21 Senator NEWLANDS.
He was regulating the lowering down to the water?
- 22 Mr. WHEELTON.
Yes.
- 23 Senator NEWLANDS.
How far off was the water at that time, from the upper deck?
- 24 Mr. WHEELTON.
It was pretty dark, but I should imagine it was about 70 or 75 feet.
- 25 Senator NEWLANDS.
So far as your observation went, were boats No. 5, No. 7, No. 9, and No. 11 loaded?
- 26 Mr. WHEELTON.
As soon as I started - I did not see the finishing of the loading of No. 5, because I was sent to the storeroom. I arrived on the deck when No. 7 was lowered, sir.
- 27 Senator NEWLANDS.
How full was that loaded?
- 28 Mr. WHEELTON.
It seemed to be pretty full. I could not estimate the number of people, because we were looking this way, and you could only see the front line of the boat, like that (*indicating*).
- 29 Senator NEWLANDS.
How about No. 9?
- 30 Mr. WHEELTON.
I could not say as to No. 9, sir.
- 31 Senator NEWLANDS.
How about No. 11; how many were in that boat?
- 32 Mr. WHEELTON.
I should say there were about 58, all told, sir.
- 33 Senator NEWLANDS.
Did these boats all take their load on the upper deck; or did they take part of it there and part of it on lower decks?
- 34 Mr. WHEELTON.
No. 5 and No. 7 and No. 9 took their loads on the top deck - the boat deck. No. 7 was lowered to A deck.

35 Senator NEWLANDS.
Did it take all its passengers from A deck?

36 Mr. WHEELTON.
Yes; barring the two sailors that jumped from the top when the chief officer told them to man the boat.

37 Senator NEWLANDS.
Why did it take them there instead of on the upper deck?

38 Mr. WHEELTON.
I believe they were assisting with the tackle on the top, these two sailors.

39 Senator NEWLANDS.
Why was your boat loaded, in the main, at A deck instead of the upper deck?

40 Mr. WHEELTON.
I could not say, sir. All the women and children were sent down, because a steward brought them down, sir.

41 Senator NEWLANDS.
Prior to that time had they been on the upper deck?

42 Mr. WHEELTON.
Yes, sir.

43 Senator NEWLANDS.
How many boats were left on that side when you left?

44 Mr. WHEELTON.
I could not say, sir. I think there were two.

45 Senator NEWLANDS.
Was Mr. Ismay still there?

46 Mr. WHEELTON.
Mr. Ismay, the last I saw of him was when we sent No. 9 away. That was when I went down to A deck to No. 11 boat, sir. He stood there at the falls.

47 Senator NEWLANDS.
Did he do anything besides help regulate the lowering of the boat?

48 Mr. WHEELTON.
He helped the women and children into the boat, sir, and told the men to make way.

49 Senator NEWLANDS.
What did he mean by making way?

50 Mr. WHEELTON.
They were all standing round in a circle, and a lady would come on deck, and he meant to make a gap so that she could come through.

51 Senator NEWLANDS.
During that trip had there been any drill of the men at the boats?

52 Mr. WHEELTON.
Not as regards us. We were generally ordered below to attend to meals, before leaving port.

53 Senator NEWLANDS.
Well, was there a drill the day you left port?

54 Mr. WHEELTON.
There was a general muster, sir.

55 Senator NEWLANDS.
How long had the crew of that boat been together?

56 Mr. WHEELTON.
Not very long. But I had sailed with quite a number of the men myself before that.

57 Senator NEWLANDS.
But how long had the crew of the Titanic been together on that ship?

58 Mr. WHEELTON.

From the day we signed, sir. I think it was on a Friday, sir.

59 Senator NEWLANDS.
The Friday before sailing?

60 Mr. WHEELTON.
The Friday before. We sailed on Wednesday, sir.

61 Senator NEWLANDS.
During that time was there any drill?

62 Mr. WHEELTON.
Not that I know of, sir.

63 Senator NEWLANDS.
What is customary regarding drill on steamships - how often do they have drills?

64 Mr. WHEELTON.
Every Sunday at sea.

65 Senator NEWLANDS.
Did you have a drill Sunday before the collision?

66 Mr. WHEELTON.
No, sir.

67 Senator NEWLANDS.
Why not?

68 Mr. WHEELTON.
I could not say, sir, unless it was the number of steerage passengers - third class passengers - that we had.

69 Senator NEWLANDS.
Why should that prevent you having drill?

70 Mr. WHEELTON.
Because if we would all go to drill, meals would not be ready for the passengers.

71 Senator NEWLANDS.
The crew, then, was taken from different steamers belonging to the White Star Line service?

72 Mr. WHEELTON.
Not only the White Star, but other ships.

73 Senator NEWLANDS.
Other services?

74 Mr. WHEELTON.
Yes, sir.

75 Senator NEWLANDS.
Were you assigned to any particular boat?

76 Mr. WHEELTON.
Yes, sir.

77 Senator NEWLANDS.
What boat?

78 Mr. WHEELTON.
No. 5, sir.

79 Senator NEWLANDS.
How many men were assigned to each boat?

80 Mr. WHEELTON.
That I can not say, sir, because there were 500 sailors. I have never counted them --

81 Senator NEWLANDS.
What class of men are assigned to the boats?

82 Mr. WHEELTON.

So many firemen, so many sailors, so many quartermasters, and so many stewards, sir.

83 Senator NEWLANDS.
Are the stewards supposed to be oarsmen?

84 Mr. WHEELTON.
Well, you see it is supposed to be a boat's crew that is to assist in lowering as well as in rowing, sir.

85 Senator NEWLANDS.
How many constitute a boat's crew?

86 Mr. WHEELTON.
That I could not say, sir.

87 Senator NEWLANDS.
How many customarily constitute a boat's crew?

88 Mr. WHEELTON.
About eight, I should say, sir.

89 Senator NEWLANDS.
Is that the number that is supposed to be available in case of emergency?

90 Mr. WHEELTON.
I should say about 8 or 10, sir; a smooth night like that.

91 Senator NEWLANDS.
How many were there on your boat?

92 Mr. WHEELTON.
I should say about eight or nine, sir.

93 Senator NEWLANDS.
Of the crew?

94 Mr. WHEELTON.
No, sir; that included a passenger.

95 Senator NEWLANDS.
How many of the crew?

96 Mr. WHEELTON.
I should say about eight.

97 Senator NEWLANDS.
How many men were there in addition to the eight?

98 Mr. WHEELTON.
One passenger, I think. Of course there might have been another down below. We never looked for him. We never looked anywhere around; we were attending to our business, sir. We had no time to search around.

99 Senator NEWLANDS.
Was there any disorder while you were there?

100 Mr. WHEELTON.
None whatever, sir.

101 Senator NEWLANDS.
Did there appear to be a scarcity of men on the upper deck to man these boats?

102 Mr. WHEELTON.
No, sir.

103 Senator NEWLANDS.
When your boat was loaded, were there any women and children left on the deck?

104 Mr. WHEELTON.
Not one. The only trouble we had was with one lady who would not get into the boat. We attempted twice to get her in, and the last time I said to my friend helping me, "Pull her in"; and we pulled her in.

105 Senator NEWLANDS.
Then she remained in, did she?

106 Mr. WHEELTON.
Yes; she remained in. She turned back the first time and went away from the rail.

107 Senator NEWLANDS.
Who was in command of your boat?

108 Mr. WHEELTON.
The quartermaster [[Sydney Humphries](#)], I believe.

109 Senator NEWLANDS.
What was his name?

110 Mr. WHEELTON.
I could not tell you what his name was.

111 Senator NEWLANDS.
What was the name of the man passenger in your boat?

112 Mr. WHEELTON.
I could not tell. I did not ask him.

113 Senator NEWLANDS.
Do you know the names of any of the ladies in your boat?

114 Mr. WHEELTON.
No, sir; I never made it my business to know their names.

115 Senator NEWLANDS.
Did you see the [captain](#) during that time?

116 Mr. WHEELTON.
I did not, sir.

117 Senator NEWLANDS.
Did you see the ship go down?

118 Mr. WHEELTON.
I did, sir.

119 Senator NEWLANDS.
Could you see the passengers on the ship when it went down?

120 Mr. WHEELTON.
I could not, sir.

121 Senator NEWLANDS.
When you left the ship where were the bulk of the remaining passengers located?

122 Mr. WHEELTON.
There was no bulk at all, sir. They were scattered all around the deck.

123 Senator NEWLANDS.
What deck?

124 Mr. WHEELTON.
There were a very few, only our own men, left on A deck when the boat went down, sir.

125 Senator NEWLANDS.
As you went down to the deck below --

126 Mr. WHEELTON.
I did not see any deck below, sir, because it is all closed in.

127 Senator NEWLANDS.
That would be B deck?

128 Mr. WHEELTON.
We passed B, sir.

129 Senator NEWLANDS.
How about C deck?

130 Mr. WHEELTON.
That was closed. There was none of those lower decks at all --

131 Senator NEWLANDS.
Where were the steerage passengers; did you see any of them?

132 Mr. WHEELTON.
No, sir, I did not.

133 Senator NEWLANDS.
There were about 1,500 passengers left on the ship, or at least 1,500 people altogether? That is the fact, I believe. Have you any idea what part of the ship they were in when you left the ship?

134 Mr. WHEELTON.
I think they were all around the ship, all over the place.

135 Senator NEWLANDS.
Did your boat rescue any people in the water?

136 Mr. WHEELTON.
No, sir; we never say one.

137 Senator NEWLANDS.
You rowed some distance from the *Titanic* did you?

138 Mr. WHEELTON.
I should imagine about 300 yards, sir. That is a rough estimate.

139 Senator NEWLANDS.
Did your boat make any effort to go back?

140 Mr. WHEELTON.
No, sir.

141 Senator NEWLANDS.
Was your boat fully loaded?

142 Mr. WHEELTON.
Yes, sir. I thought so, sir; because it was rather difficult in rowing. I kept catching the people with my oar.

143 Senator NEWLANDS.
How about waking up the passengers; whose duty is it to do that when an accident of that kind occurs?

144 Mr. WHEELTON.
The bedroom stewards'.

145 Senator NEWLANDS.
Were you a bedroom steward?

146 Mr. WHEELTON.
No, sir.

147 Senator NEWLANDS.
Do you know whether they did wake them up?

148 Mr. WHEELTON.
I believe so, sir; I could not say.

149 Senator NEWLANDS.
Do you know how many of the crew were saved?

150 Mr. WHEELTON.
I have read in the papers, sir. There were 210, all told.

151 Senator NEWLANDS.
What proportion of those were women?

152 Mr. WHEELTON.
I think there were about 15.

153 Senator NEWLANDS.
How many women were there in the crew?

154 Mr. WHEELTON.
I could not tell you. There were stewardesses and Turkish-bath attendants.

155 Senator NEWLANDS.
Do you know the number?

156 Mr. WHEELTON.
No, sir.

157 Senator NEWLANDS.
Did they number 50, do you think?

158 Mr. WHEELTON.
I could not say. No; I do not suppose they would.

159 Senator NEWLANDS.
Out of a total of 750 who were saved, there were 210 who belonged to the crew. How do you account for the fact that so large a proportion of the people saved belonged to the crew?

160 Mr. WHEELTON.
I would think, myself, the men took a chance and jumped overboard and swam for it and were picked up by boats. We had very powerful swimmers aboard the ship. Some of the best men I ever saw in the water were on that ship, sir.

161 Senator NEWLANDS.
But you saw no men who were saved in that way?

162 Mr. WHEELTON.
Not in our boat, sir.

163 Senator NEWLANDS.
Did you see them being taken into any other boat?

164 Mr. WHEELTON.
No; it was too dark. I could not see, sir.

165 Senator NEWLANDS.
Did you see anything of either of the rafts or collapsible boats?

166 Mr. WHEELTON.
No, sir. We did not sight another boat until daybreak next morning. We saw the lights, but we did not get near enough to them.

167 Senator NEWLANDS.
Did you see anything of [Mr. Clarence Moore](#) or [Maj. Butt](#)?

168 Mr. WHEELTON.
No, sir.

169 Senator NEWLANDS.
Did you know them?

170 Mr. WHEELTON.
I did not, sir.

171 Senator NEWLANDS.
Did you know [Mr. Frank Millet](#)?

172 Mr. WHEELTON.
I did not, sir.

173 Senator NEWLANDS.
Have you given your address?

174 Mr. WHEELTON.
Norwood House, Belmore Road, Shirley, Southampton, England.

175 Senator NEWLANDS.
How about the steerage passengers; did any of them come up on the upper deck?

176 Mr. WHEELTON.

Oh, yes; they could come up just as I did. When I went to get the bottle of biscuits, I had to go right down to their quarters for it. The storeroom lies below their quarters. There was nothing to prevent me from going down to the storeroom.

177 Senator NEWLANDS.

Out of the 210 of the crew who were saved, only 15 were women.

178 Mr. WHEELTON.

I think about that number. I could not say.

179 Senator NEWLANDS.

Is there any particular point that you would like to speak of, or anything in regard to the collision that you know that you think you ought to tell?

180 Mr. WHEELTON.

I would like to say something about the bravery exhibited by the first officer, Mr. Murdoch. He was perfectly cool and very calm.

181 Senator NEWLANDS.

And he was lost?

182 Mr. WHEELTON.

Yes, sir; he was lost.

183 Senator NEWLANDS.

You were on the starboard side, were you?

184 Mr. WHEELTON.

Yes.

185 Senator NEWLANDS.

How many boats were on that side?

186 Mr. WHEELTON.

I could not say just how many there were.

187 Senator NEWLANDS.

How many had been lowered before you took No. 11?

188 Mr. WHEELTON.

I believe the emergency boat had gone; No. 3 had gone; No. 5 was going as I went to the storeroom; No. 7 had gone; No. 9 had gone, and No. 11 - that was my boat.

189 Senator NEWLANDS.

That would make 6 boats?

190 Mr. WHEELTON.

Yes, sir.

191 (Witness excused.)