

British Wreck Commissioner's Inquiry

Day 16

Testimony of Ernest Archer

Source : <http://www.titanicinquiry.org/BOTInq/BOTIndx01.php#a>

Examined by Mr. BUTLER ASPINALL.

Mr. Butler Aspinall:

This is boat 16. I told your Lordship we were going to call a man from boat 15. We have called several, and we are not going to call any more for that.

The Commissioner:
Then this is the last?

18112. (*Mr. Butler Aspinall.*) Yes, this is the last from the boats, My Lord. (*To the witness.*) Ernest Archer, were you serving as an A.B. on the "Titanic" on the 14th April of this year?
- Yes.

18113. And do you remember the "Titanic" hitting an iceberg?
- Yes.

18114. I think you were asleep at the time. You got up, went on deck, and helped to uncover and lower boats?
- Yes.

18115. And then later on did you go away in boat No. 16?
- Yes.

18116. Were there any of the crew in it besides yourself?
- Yes, five.

18117. Who were they?
- Another able seaman, two firemen, a steward, and a Master-at-arms.

18118. (*The Commissioner.*) There were seven, then, were there?

Mr. Butler Aspinall:
Yes, seven, including himself.

The Witness:
No, six.

18119. Six and yourself?
- No, six with me; one a.B. and myself, two firemen, a steward, and a Master-at-arms.

18120. (*The Commissioner.*) Six?
- Yes.

18121. (*Mr. Butler Aspinall.*) Who else was in the boat?
- All women and children.

18122. How many in all?
- About 50.

18123. And how many of the 50 were children?
- Five, I believe.

18124. I think you rowed away from the ship and at daybreak were picked up by the "Carpathia"?
- Yes.

Examined by Mr. SCANLAN.

18125. I think you were not stationed in this boat in which you left?
- No.

18126. The boat you were stationed to was No 7?
- Yes.

- 26 Examined by Sir ROBERT FINLAY.
27 18127. Were you able to say what class passengers they were, the women on your boat?
- I should say second and third class.
28 18128. As far as you know?
- As far as I know.
29 (The Witness withdrew.)

30 United States Senate Inquiry

31 Source : <http://www.titanicinquiry.org/USInq/AmInq01Indxa.php>

32 Testimony of Ernest Archer

33 (*The witness was sworn by Senator Bourne.*)

34 Senator BOURNE.
Please state your name, age, residence, and occupation.

35 Mr. ARCHER.
[Ernest Archer](#); age 36; 59 Port Chester Road, Woolston, Southampton; able seaman.

36 Senator BOURNE.
How long have you been rated as an able seaman?

37 Mr. ARCHER.
About 20 years.

38 Senator BOURNE.
How long have you sailed with the White Star Line?

39 Mr. ARCHER.
With the White Star Line, five years this month.

40 Senator BOURNE.
When did you join the [Titanic](#)?

41 Mr. ARCHER.
On Wednesday, the 10th of April, sir.

42 Senator BOURNE.
Did you sign the day she sailed?

43 Mr. ARCHER.
No; signed on Monday, two days before she sailed.

44 Senator BOURNE.
You were on the *Titanic* at the time of the catastrophe?

45 Mr. ARCHER.
Yes, sir.

46 Senator BOURNE.
Will you explain, please, in your own way, what occurred immediately preceding and following the accident?

47 Mr. ARCHER.
I was in my bunk, asleep. I heard a kind of a crush, something similar to when you let go the anchor; it wounded like the cable running through the hawse pipe.

48 Senator BOURNE.
Was there a shock, a jar?

49 Mr. ARCHER.
No; no shock and no jar; just a grating sensation.

50 Senator BOURNE.
You were asleep at the time?

51 Mr. ARCHER.
I was asleep at the time.

52 Senator BOURNE.
Are you a sound or a light sleeper?

53 Mr. ARCHER.
A pretty light sleeper, sir.

54 Senator BOURNE.
You are easily awakened?

55 Mr. ARCHER.
Yes, sir.

56 Senator BOURNE.
So, if there had been much of a shock, you think you would have felt it, although you had been asleep?

57 Mr. ARCHER.
Yes, sir.

58 Senator BOURNE.
It was more of a noise?

59 Mr. ARCHER.
More of a noise than a shock, sir.

60 Senator BOURNE.
What happened?

61 Mr. ARCHER.
I jumped out of my bed, put on a pair of trousers, and ran up on deck to find out what was the matter. I saw some small pieces of ice on the starboard side, on the forward deck.

62 Senator BOURNE.
Which deck?

63 Mr. ARCHER.
The [fore well deck](#).

64 Senator BOURNE.
How much ice was there?

65 Mr. ARCHER.
Not an extraordinary lot, sir.

66 Senator BOURNE.
How much?

67 Mr. ARCHER.
Not a great lot.

68 Senator BOURNE.
No heavy pieces?

69 Mr. ARCHER.
No, sir.

70 Senator BOURNE.
Not any 50 or 100 ton chunks?

71 Mr. ARCHER.
No; nothing like that; just small pieces.

72 Senator BOURNE.
No pieces any larger than your head?

73 Mr. ARCHER.
No; I never saw any larger than that. After I saw the ice I went back in the door and put on a pair of shoes, a

guernsey, and a cap. While I was doing that the boatswain ordered us on deck.

74 Senator BOURNE.
How long after that did that occur?

75 Mr. ARCHER.
About 10 minutes, sir.

76 Senator BOURNE.
What did you do?

77 Mr. ARCHER.
We went on deck to the top of the forecastle ladder, to the boatswain, and we waited for the watch, and he gave us orders, and we proceeded to the [boat deck](#) and proceeded to uncover and clear away the boats.

78 Senator BOURNE.
Had you been assigned to a boat?

79 Mr. ARCHER.
Yes, sir.

80 Senator BOURNE.
What number?

81 Mr. ARCHER.
[No. 7.](#)

82 Senator BOURNE.
That was on the port side?

83 Mr. ARCHER.
No; on the starboard side, sir.

84 Senator BOURNE.
The odd numbers were on the starboard side?

85 Mr. ARCHER.
Yes; the odd numbers on the starboard side and the even numbers on the port.

86 Senator BOURNE.
Did you go right to your own boat, No. 7?

87 Mr. ARCHER.
No; we did not have orders to go to No. 7; we had orders to uncover all boats.

88 Senator BOURNE.
You went, then to the boat you were nearest to at the time?

89 Mr. ARCHER.
We were to start and get it ready for lowering.

90 Senator BOURNE.
After you uncovered the boats, what then?

91 Mr. ARCHER.
We went to them, uncovered them, and got the falls ready for lowering. Then I went over to the starboard side and assisted in lowering about three boats. I could not mention the number of the boats I lowered. I never taken any notice. Then an officer came along - I could not mention his name - and he sang out that they wanted some seamen on the other side, on the port side, to assist over there. I went over then and assisted in getting Nos. [12](#), [14](#), and [15](#) out. I assisted in getting the falls and everything ready, and the passengers into No. 14 boat. Then I went to [No. 16](#).

92 Senator BOURNE.
Have you a recollection that would be sufficiently distinct to be of value to the number of passengers that went into Nos. 12, 14, and 16?

93 Mr. ARCHER.
Well, I should say, sir, they would approach about 50.

94 Senator BOURNE.

To each boat?

95 Mr. ARCHER.
To each boat.

96 Senator BOURNE.
Then what?

97 Mr. ARCHER.
Then when I got to No. 16 boat the officer told me to get into the boat and see that the plug was in; so I got in the boat. I seen that the plug was in tight; then they started to put passengers in, and I assisted to get them in.

98 Senator BOURNE.
Were you still remaining in No. 16?

99 Mr. ARCHER.
Still remaining in the boat and assisting the passengers, children and ladies, to the boat.

100 Senator BOURNE.
Did any men get in?

101 Mr. ARCHER.
No, sir; I never saw any men get it, sir; only my mate.

102 Senator BOURNE.
You were directed by the officer to get into the boat, and your mate was directed by the officer to get into the boat?

103 Mr. ARCHER.
So far as I know, he was, sir. I never heard the order for him to get in. I was busy with the children. I was busy. I did not know who was speaking.

104 Senator BOURNE.
Then what?

105 Mr. ARCHER.
I heard him give orders to lower the boat. The last order I received after I heard that was from the officer, to allow nobody in the boat, and there was no one else to get into the boat. That was just prior to starting the lowering.

106 Senator BOURNE.
You and your mate were in the boat?

107 Mr. ARCHER.
Yes, sir.

108 Senator BOURNE.
Was the officer in the boat?

109 Mr. ARCHER.
No; no officer in the boat.

110 Senator BOURNE.
Then you lowered the boat?

111 Mr. ARCHER.
We lowered the boat, and my mate pulled at the releasing bar for both falls, and that cleared the boat, and we started to pull away.

112 Senator BOURNE.
Having about 50 passengers in the boat and only your mate and yourself?

113 Mr. ARCHER.
Yes, sir; the master-at-arms [[Joseph Bailey](#)] came down after us. He was the coxswain.

114 Senator BOURNE.
He came down one of the ropes?

115 Mr. ARCHER.

Yes, sir; came down the fall.

116 Senator BOURNE.
He was sent by an officer?

117 Mr. ARCHER.
I presume he was sent by an officer.

118 Senator BOURNE.
To help fill up your complement?

119 Mr. ARCHER.
He said he was sent down to be the coxswain of the boat.

120 Senator BOURNE.
And he took charge?

121 Mr. ARCHER.
He took charge.

122 Senator BOURNE.
And you acted under his orders, you and your mate?

123 Mr. ARCHER.
Yes.

124 Senator BOURNE.
So there were three of you and about 50 passengers?

125 Mr. ARCHER.
Yes, sir.

126 Senator BOURNE.
All women and children, or some men?

127 Mr. ARCHER.
All women and children.

128 Senator BOURNE.
While you were loading the boat was there any effort made on the part of the others to crowd into the boat?

129 Mr. ARCHER.
No, sir; I never saw any.

130 Senator BOURNE.
No confusion?

131 Mr. ARCHER.
No confusion at all.

132 Senator BOURNE.
No individuals, men or others, who were repelled from getting in?

133 Mr. ARCHER.
No, sir; I never saw anything of that at all, sir; everything was quiet and steady.

134 Senator BOURNE.
Then after you commenced to row away?

135 Mr. ARCHER.
We rowed, I should say, a quarter of a mile away from the ship, and we remained there.

136 Senator BOURNE.
Why did you remain?

137 Mr. ARCHER.
We stood by the ship, sir. We would not go right away from it. To tell you the truth, I did not think the ship would go down. I thought we might go back to her again afterwards.

138 Senator BOURNE.
After she struck, the general impression, so far as the ship was concerned, was that she was not going to sink?

139 Mr. ARCHER.
I did not think so myself, sir.

140 Senator BOURNE.
You remained, then, about a quarter of a mile away, and what happened?

141 Mr. ARCHER.
I heard a couple of explosions.

142 Senator BOURNE.
You heard two?

143 Mr. ARCHER.
I heard two.

144 Senator BOURNE.
How far apart were the two?

145 Mr. ARCHER.
I should say they would be about 20 minutes between each explosion. From the time I heard the first one until I heard the second one it would be about 20 minutes, sir.

146 Senator BOURNE.
What did you assume from the explosions?

147 Mr. ARCHER.
That the water had gotten into the boiler room.

148 Senator BOURNE.
Were you sufficiently near so that you could see the ship itself when you were about a quarter of mile away?

149 Mr. ARCHER.
Yes, sir; quite distinguish it.

150 Senator BOURNE.
That is, the lights on the ship?

151 Mr. ARCHER.
Oh, yes; sir.

152 Senator BOURNE.
Did the bow lights go out first?

153 Mr. ARCHER.
They started to go out from forward.

154 Senator BOURNE.
Did quite a number of the lights in the bow, or forward, go out at the same time?

155 Mr. ARCHER.
Yes, sir.

156 Senator BOURNE.
Or were they gradually going out?

157 Mr. ARCHER.
Gradually worked along, sir.

158 Senator BOURNE.
From bow to stern?

159 Mr. ARCHER.
From bow to stern; yes, sir.

160 Senator BOURNE.
Do you think the ship broke in two?

161 Mr. ARCHER.
Well, I could not say that, sir.

162 Senator BOURNE.
There was nothing that gave you such an impression?

163 Mr. ARCHER.
No, sir.

164 Senator BOURNE.
You were watching the ship all the time?

165 Mr. ARCHER.
Watching it settle down all the time; yes, sir.

166 Senator BOURNE.
How long a period elapsed from the time the lights began to go out forward, and then aft, before all the lights went out? Two or three minutes or seconds?

167 Mr. ARCHER.
I should say three quarters of an hour.

168 Senator BOURNE.
You would?

169 Mr. ARCHER.
Yes, sir; from the time they first started to go out.

170 Senator BOURNE.
You were not familiar with the boiler rooms on the ship?

171 Mr. ARCHER.
No, sir; I never was in the boiler rooms at all.

172 Senator BOURNE.
Did you hear any cries after the lights went out?

173 Mr. ARCHER.
Yes, sir; when the ship went down she seemed to come up on end.

174 Senator BOURNE.
When she came up on end, the stern up in the air, was her keel visible? Did you see that?

175 Mr. ARCHER.
I could not say, sir, that I could see her keel.

176 Senator BOURNE.
Were the lights still visible on the stern?

177 Mr. ARCHER.
No, sir; the lights were out.

178 Senator BOURNE.
How, at that time in the morning, would it be possible for you to see that the stern was in the air and the bow down, at a distance of a quarter of a mile? It was just a black object, was it not?

179 Mr. ARCHER.
Yes, sir; just a black mass.

180 Senator BOURNE.
What time, about, did you figure this was? Have you any idea?

181 Mr. ARCHER.
Well, I should say about 2 o'clock.

182 Senator BOURNE.
But that would be a guess on your part, would it?

183 Mr. ARCHER.
Yes, sir; about 2 o'clock. I had no watch to see any time, so it would be only a rough guess.

184 Senator BOURNE.
Then what did you do after the ship had sunk?

185 Mr. ARCHER.
It was spoken by one of the lady passengers to go back and see if there was anyone in the water we could pick up, but I never heard any more of it after that.

186 Senator BOURNE.
And the boat was in charge of the master-at-arms?

187 Mr. ARCHER.
The master-at-arms had charge of the boat.

188 Senator BOURNE.
Did this lady request you to go back?

189 Mr. ARCHER.
Yes, sir; she requested us to go back.

190 Senator BOURNE.
What did he say?

191 Mr. ARCHER.
I did not hear; I was in the forepart of the boat.

192 Senator BOURNE.
There were 50 people in the boat?

193 Mr. ARCHER.
Yes, sir.

194 Senator BOURNE.
And you were rowing?

195 Mr. ARCHER.
Yes, sir.

196 Senator BOURNE.
Did any of the ladies in the boat ask to help to row or take a trick at the oar?

197 Mr. ARCHER.
There was one, a stewardess.

198 Senator BOURNE.
She tried to assist?

199 Mr. ARCHER.
She tried to assist.

200 Senator BOURNE.
And she did?

201 Mr. ARCHER.
She did do so. I told her it was not necessary for her to do it, but she said she would like to do it to keep herself warm.

202 Senator BOURNE.
Your boat was perfectly watertight?

203 Mr. ARCHER.
Oh, yes; no water in it at all, sir.

204 Senator BOURNE.
Then you stood by until the [*Carpathia*](#) rescued you all?

205 Mr. ARCHER.
And we fancied we saw a light, sir, and we started to pull toward the light for a time, and then, after we had been pulling for it half an hour, we saw the *Carpathia's* side lights.

206 Senator BOURNE.
Was it the *Carpathia* you thought you saw?

207 Mr. ARCHER.
Not in the first place.

208 Senator BOURNE.
What was that?

209 Mr. ARCHER.

We did not know what became of that. When we saw the *Carpathia*, we turned to go back. I knew that was a steamboat of some kind, so we turned and made back towards the *Carpathia*. Of course, it turned out to be the *Carpathia*. We did not know at the time what ship it was, but I knew it was a steamboat of some kind.

210 Senator BOURNE.

Were any of your people transferred from your boat after you lowered her, or taken from the water by you?

211 Mr. ARCHER.

Yes, sir; one fireman. There was one fireman found in the boat after we got clear. I do not know how he come there.

212 Senator BOURNE.

Was he taken out of the water?

213 Mr. ARCHER.

No, sir; I do not know how he come in the boat. He was transferred from another boat, I think it was [No. 9](#), after we were pulling toward the *Carpathia*.

214 Senator BOURNE.

Why was he transferred; to help row the other boat?

215 Mr. ARCHER.

Yes, sir; to help row the other. I believe that there was only one other able seaman in it.

216 Senator BOURNE.

Do you know his name?

217 Mr. ARCHER.

The fireman's?

218 Senator BOURNE.

Yes.

219 Mr. ARCHER.

No, sir; I do not.

220 Senator BOURNE.

What were your duties at sea?

221 Mr. ARCHER.

Keeping the ship clean; washing the paint work; scrubbing and keeping the deck clean.

222 Senator BOURNE.

Thank you, Mr. Archer.