

British Wreck Commissioner's Inquiry

Day 10

Testimony of Albert E. J. Horswell

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

Examined by the ATTORNEY-GENERAL.

The Commissioner:
Where was this man in the boat?

The Attorney-General:
He was right in the bow, My Lord; he is the other seaman.

The Commissioner:
How many of the men from this boat have we had? We have had three.

The Attorney-General:
Yes.

The Commissioner:
This is the fourth?

12319. (*The Attorney-General.*) So far, we have had Hendrickson, Symons, and Taylor. Now you are going to have the other seaman, who was in the bow. (*To the witness.*) Are you an able seaman?
- Yes.

12320. Were you on board the "Titanic"?
- Yes.

12321. (*The Attorney-General.*) I want to go straight to the point, My Lord. (*To the witness.*) Do you remember being ordered into the emergency boat on the starboard side?
- Yes.

12322. Who ordered you to get into the boat?
- The first Officer, Mr. Murdoch.

12323. Do you know Mr. Lowe?
- Yes.

12324. The fifth Officer?
- Yes.

12325. Was he about at the time?
- I did not see him.

12326. Then you were ordered into the boat, and did you get in?
- Yes.

12327. Were there any passengers in when you got into the boat?
- No, nobody at all.

12328. After you had got in, five passengers were in your boat and you were seven crew all told?
- Yes.

12329. That is right. Now there was plenty of room in the boat for others?
- Yes.

12330. Do you remember what the orders were that were given to the boat when she was lowered?
- Yes.

12331. Will you tell me what they were?
- To lower the boat and lay off the ship.

12332. And come back when called?
- Yes.

12333. Let me put it to you as we have had it. Was the boat told to stand off a little way and come back when

called?

- That is right.

26 12334. Did you proceed to row a little way off?

- Yes.

27 12335. Where were you sitting?

- In the bow of the boat.

28 12336. Did you see the "Titanic" go down?

- No.

29 12337. Was your back to it?

- No, I never saw it go down at all.

30 12338. Did you hear cries?

- Yes.

31 12339. And when you heard cries you knew that they were cries from persons who had gone down in the "Titanic"?

- Yes, I heard them, but I did not know whether they were from the other boats or from the ship.

32 12340-1. You did not know?

- No.

33 12342. But you heard cries which you knew came from people in the water who were screaming for help?

- Yes.

34 12343. Were you rowing?

- Yes.

35 12344. Right in the bow?

- Yes.

36 12345. So all except the coxswain would have their backs to you in the boat?

- We were all facing the coxswain; those pulling were facing the coxswain.

37 12346. Then they would all have their backs to you except the coxswain. Do you remember how far you had rowed before the "Titanic" went down - before you heard the cries?

- No, I could not say the exact time.

38 12347. Nor the exact distance, perhaps?

- No.

39 12348. When you heard the cries did you hear anything said as to whether you were to go back or not?

- No, nothing at all said.

40 12349. Do you mean from first to last nothing was said?

- From first to last.

41 12350. Did you hear anybody suggest that you should go back to the people who were crying for help?

- No.

42 12351. Do you mean that not one of you said anything about it?

- No one suggested it at all. I never heard anybody suggest anything.

43 12352. Did you hear anybody say that if you did you might get swamped?

- No, I did not hear anything at all, no suggestion whatever. I never heard any conversation at all.

44 12353. Did you hear anybody give any reason why you should not go back and pick up the people who were drowning?

- No.

45 12354. Did you hear any conversation at all about it?

- No.

46 12355. Was anything said by anybody?

- I could not say.

47 12356. I only want to understand what you mean. It may be that you do not remember. Is that what you mean?

- I do not remember anybody saying anything about it.

48 12357. You told me just now you did not see the "Titanic" go down?
- No.

49 12358. Were you looking towards the "Titanic," or away from her?
- I was looking to the coxswain. I had to obey the orders of the coxswain of the boat, and I did not have time to do anything but pull my oar.

50 12359. I do not quite understand what you mean. You heard the cries of the people who were in the water?
- Yes.

51 12360. And were you rowing at the time?
- Yes.

52 12361. Do you mean that no notice was taken of the cries by anybody on board?
- I could not say; I had to obey the orders of the coxswain of the boat.

53 12362. I am not asking that; I understand that, of course, you would do what you were told by the man in charge of the boat?
- That is right.

54 12363. I am not asking you about that; I want to know what happened?
- We saw a light on the port bow of the ship, and we went to pull towards the light.

55 The Commissioner:
That is the white light, I understand?

56 12364. (*The Attorney-General.*) Yes, My Lord. (*To the witness.*) Was anybody sitting on the thwart close to you?
- No, I was on the thwart by myself.

57 12365. As far as you were concerned you were talking to nobody?
- No, I had conversation with nobody at all.

58 12366. And you heard nothing at all, is that right?
- That is right.

59 Examined by Mr. SCANLAN.

60 12367. It would have been quite a safe thing to have gone back?
- Yes.

61 12368. And taken in some people?
- Yes, it would have been.

62 The Commissioner:
Did you hear that question and answer, Mr. Attorney?

63 The Attorney-General:
I do not think I did.

64 The Commissioner:
He was asked whether it would have been quite safe to go to the rescue of these people and he said it would.

65 12369. (*Mr. Scanlan - To the witness.*) Did it not occur to you that the proper thing to do under those circumstances was to row back?
- It would have been the proper thing to do, but I had to obey the orders of the coxswain of the boat, so it was no good my suggesting anything at all.

66 12370. Had the coxswain on your boat said "Oh, we must not go back"?
- There was no conversation. I never heard any orders from the coxswain at all.

67 12371. You must have been greatly touched when you heard those poor creatures screaming for help?
- Yes.

68 12372. Did you suppress your feelings and say not a word to anybody?
- Yes, that is right. I hardly knew what I was doing at the time, and I did not suggest anything at all.

69 12373. You had two ladies and three gentlemen in the boat?
- That is right, Sir.

70 12374. Is this your evidence, that they also suppressed their feelings, and said nothing?
- That is right. I did not hear them say anything.

71 12375. Did it not occur to you that it was really an inhuman thing to leave those people to perish when you could have gone to their assistance and rescued some of them?
- It was inhuman.

72 12376. It was an inhuman thing?
- Yes.

73 12377. Did you feel it to be so at the time?
- I did feel it, Sir.

74 12378. Why did not you say something to those passengers?
- I had to obey the orders of the coxswain of the boat. I was in the boat just the same as they were.

75 The Commissioner:
You will not get him away from that, you know.

76 Examined by Mr. HARBINSON.

77 12379. You said you saw lights on the port side?
- Yes.

78 12380. When did you see those lights first?
- I saw lights when I was clearing away the port emergency boat.

79 12381. Before you launched your boat?
- Yes.

80 12382. Did you hear any order given to those in your boat about standing by?
- Yes, stand by the ship after we had lowered.

81 12383. Did you hear Mr. Murdoch give that order?
- Yes.

82 12384. You saw those lights before you were lowered?
- Yes.

83 12385. Was there any conversation about the lights, as to what they might be?
- No.

84 12386. Did you get any orders to row towards those lights?
- No.

85 12387. How did you know you rowed towards them?
- Because I looked round.

86 12388. And saw you were rowing in that direction?
- Yes.

87 12389. From the time your boat was lowered did you commence to row towards those lights?
- No, we pulled a little away from the ship and then stopped.

88 12390. How long did you stop?
- I should say about a quarter of an hour.

89 12391. And then did you commence to row towards the lights?
- Yes.

90 12392. Was that before the "Titanic" went down?
- Yes, before the "Titanic" went down.

91 12393. So that when the "Titanic" went down you were actually rowing towards those lights?
- Yes.

92 And disobeying the orders that were given you?

93 Examined by Mr. EDWARDS.

94 12394. How long had this boat been ready to be lowered before it was in fact lowered?
- The boat is always supposed to be ready, the emergency boats are.

95 12395. I will put in this way. How soon was this boat lowered after the last person got into it?
- About five minutes after the last person got in.

96 12396. Do you know who the last person was?
- No.

97 12397. Was it a lady or a gentleman?
- I could not say.

98 12398. Did you see them going in?
- Yes, I saw them getting into the boat.

99 12399. How long had you been in the boat before they got in?
- A very few minutes; about five minutes.

100 12400. Who gave the orders to lower away?
- Mr. Murdoch, the first Officer.

101 12401. How do you know that it was Mr. Murdoch?
- We have been together long enough, we ought to know each other.

102 12402. You say it was Mr. Murdoch?
- Yes.

103 12403. Was he the Officer who gave the instructions about standing by?
- Yes.

104 12404. As I understand, you were right up the front end of the boat?
- Yes, right in the bow of the boat.

105 12405. In what position in relation to where you were was Hendrickson?
- He was abaft me.

106 12406. With his back towards you?
- Yes, back towards me.

107 12407. So I suppose it would have been possible for Hendrickson to have said something to somebody still further abaft without your hearing?
- That is right, Sir.

108 12408. Did you see anybody seasick in your boat?
- Yes.

109 12409. Who?
- A lady.

110 12410. Where was she sitting?
- The starboard side of the boat.

111 12411. Was she sitting alone?
- I think there was another man pulling an oar alongside of her.

112 12412 How far away was that from you?
- A very short distance, about two or three thwarts.

113 12413. Did you hear this lady say anything?
- No.

114 12414. Nothing at all? Now, have you had a present?
- Yes, I had a present given to me two days after we got on board the "Carpathia."

115 12415. When did you first hear anything about the present?
- I did not know anything about that until they sent for me.

116 12416. Who sent for you?
- Some gentleman.

117 12417. Who was that gentleman?
- Mr. Duff-Gordon, I think.

118 12418. Has anyone seen you take a statement on behalf of Sir duff-Gordon?
- No.

119 12419. Nobody at all?
- No.

120 Examined by Mr. HOLMES.

121 12420. Did you see whether there were any passengers, Male or female, left on the deck when your boat was lowered?
- I could not see any passengers at all before we got lowered.

122 12421. There were none there?
- There were none there.

123 Examined by Mr. COTTER.

124 12422. Just one question. How long was it from the time the ship struck until your boat was lowered?
- It is impossible for me to say.

125 12423. Can you give us no idea at all?
- No.

126 12424. What was the number of your boat?
- No. 1.

127 12425. Where were you when the ship struck?
- In my bunk, asleep.

128 12426. What did you do when you got out of your bunk?
- Dressed myself, and the boatswain came and said he did not want all hands on deck. Two or three seconds after he came and ordered us all up on deck and told us to clear away the boats.

129 12427. How long did it take to clear away the boats?
- Ten minutes.

130 12428. How long did it take to clear the boats?
- We cleared away the port side first and then were ordered across to the starboard side.

131 12429. Did you go straight to No. 1 boat then?
- No. I was ordered to the port emergency boat. I was ordered to put the lantern in the boat and a chronometer. I did that and came out again, and I was sent to the starboard boats. Then I was ordered into No. 1 boat.

132 12430. How many of the starboard boats were out when you got to No. 1 boat?
- Before we got lowered?

133 12431. When you got round to No. 1 boat, how many of the starboard boats were swung out then?
- About three or four were swung out. No. 1 boat was always swung out and No. 2.

134 12432. Was No. 3 swung out?
- No.

135 12433. Where was it?
- No. 3 boat was not swung out.

136 12434. Are you sure No. 3 boat was not swung out?
- I was not there.

137 The Commissioner:
Mr. Cotter, you are always disappointing my hopes. You begin by saying, "Just one question," and then you never keep your word.

138 12435. (*Mr. Cotter - To the witness.*) When you were lowered to the water, was there any order given through the megaphone?
- No, we had our orders before we started to lower.

139 12436. You were in the bow?
- Yes.

140 12437. You would be looking towards the coxswain?
- Yes.

141 12438. So that Hendrickson would have his back to you?

- That is right.

142 12439. How far was Sir duff-Gordon sitting from you?
- I forget whether it was the second or the third thwart - the second thwart from me.

143 12440. And you could not hear any conversation?
- No, no conversation at all.

144 Examined by Mr. LEWIS.

145 12441. You said you did not see the ship sink?
- No.

146 12442. Did you hear anyone mention that she had sunk?
- We heard a bit of an explosion and we thought she had gone then.

147 12443. "We thought"?
- Yes.

148 12444. Did you say anything about that you thought it had gone down?
- We never saw the ship go down. We thought she had gone down when we heard the explosions.

149 12445. Did you say anything to anyone about the explosions?
- No.

150 And no one said anything to you?
- No.

151 12447. Do not you think it is rather strange that you did not say, "the ship has gone down," or "has it gone down"?
- I did not say it, but I thought it myself, from my own feelings. I do not remember much at all about it. I only know that I heard explosions.

152 Sir Robert Finlay:
I have nothing to ask.

153 (The Witness withdrew.)