

British Wreck Commissioner's Inquiry

Day 11

Testimony of Walter Wynn

Examined by Mr. BUTLER ASPINALL.

13315. Were you serving as Quartermaster on the "Titanic" at the time of this accident?

- I was.

13316. And I believe you were saved in boat 9, were you not?

- Yes.

13317. Were you off watch at the time of the striking?

- Yes.

13318. I think you were asleep and you were awakened?

- Yes.

13319. I believe you got up, dressed, and did you go to the boat deck after a time?

- No.

13320. I do not want to take you through the whole story, I presume it is quite unnecessary; after a time did you hear this, the Captain giving an order to you and another quartermaster, to go and get the two accident boats ready?

- Yes.

13321. I want to omit the earlier part, you see. Did you obey that order?

- Yes.

13322. After that did you go and help to clear away at various lifeboats?

- Yes.

13323. After that did you meet the sixth Officer Mr. Moody, who told you to go to your own boat?

- Yes.

13324. Did you know your own boat?

- No.

13325. Did you ascertain what was your own boat then?

- No, not then.

13326. Did you go to a boat?

- Mr. Moody told me to go to number nine boat and take charge of number nine.

13327. Whether that was your right boat or not, you do not know?

- It was all ready swinging out on the davits and he told me to take charge of No. 9, as I did not know my own boat.

13328. Did you take charge of No. 9?

- I got in and assisted the ladies in; and when we started to lower away the boatswain's mate got into the boat, and I handed charge over to him, and took an oar.

13329. That boat was lowered down to the water?

- Yes.

13330. How many people were there in that boat?

- Forty-two women, and I think about fourteen men.

13331. Were the men all passengers?

- No.

13332. How were the men divided up?

- There were about four stewards sitting in the bow and there were three seamen, and afterwards I heard one other man was a seaman that I did not know, and that made four.

13333. What were the rest?

- They were men passengers.

- 24 13334. (*The Commissioner.*) That would be six passengers?
- Yes.
- 25 13335. (*Mr. Butler Aspinall.*) Later on, were you saved and taken to the "Carpathia"?
- I was.
- 26 13336. Before I get you on to the "Carpathia" I just want to ask you this one matter: While you were in the boat did you see any light or lights?
- I did.
- 27 13337. What light or lights did you see?
- I saw a red light first, and then the red light disappeared, and I saw a white one.
- 28 13338. What did you think the red light was?
- I could not say; I put it down to a steamer.
- 29 13339. You thought it was the port light of a steamer?
- Yes.
- 30 13340. How far away did you judge it to be?
- About seven or eight miles.
- 31 13341. When you saw the white light did you ever see the white light at the same time as you were seeing the red light? Did you see them at the same time?
- Yes, at first I did.
- 32 13342. (*The Commissioner.*) Then I do not understand it. I thought you first saw a red light, and then it disappeared, and then you saw a white light?
- I saw the red and white, and then the red and white disappeared, and then I saw the white light remain.
- 33 13343. You saw both the red and the white light at the same time?
- Yes.
- 34 13344. And then they both disappeared?
- Yes; they both disappeared and left the white light.
- 35 13345. (*Mr. Butler Aspinall.*) That does not do, you see. You saw a red light?
- Yes.
- 36 13346. And you saw a white light?
- Yes.
- 37 13347. Did you think at that time that these were the two lights of a steamer?
- I did.
- 38 13348. (*The Commissioner.*) About 7 or 8 miles away?
- Yes.
- 39 13349. (*Mr. Butler Aspinall.*) After some little interval of time both those lights disappeared according to you?
- Yes.
- 40 13350. After they disappeared, when next did you see any lights?
- It went away, and then I saw the white light about 10 or 15 minutes afterwards again in the same direction.
- 41 13351. I think you mean this, do you not, that you assumed that the white light you saw on the later occasion was the white light you had been seeing before?
- Or it might have been a stern light.
- 42 Examined by Mr. SCANLAN.
- 43 13352. What are the duties of a Quartermaster?
- To take the wheel and attend to the Officers as a stand-by man, and when you have got the last trick of the wheel to go aft on the poop and stand by there during the whole watch, and in case of an accident, if a passenger falls overboard or attempts to commit suicide, to throw a lifebelt or a lifebuoy, and warn them on the bridge at once.
- 44 13353. With regard to this lifeboat number 9, had it its proper equipment?
- We had no lamp and we had no compass.

- 45 13354. Had you oil?
- No, we had no oil.
- 46 13355. Had you a sea anchor?
- We had a sea anchor.
- 47 13356. And balers?
- We had two balers.
- 48 13357. Of those two things you are certain that she had neither a compass nor a lamp?
- No. I made sure in the morning at daylight.
- 49 13358. You have had a good deal of experience of the clearing of boats before starting on a voyage?
- Yes.
- 50 13359. I want to ask you this; is it the usual practice to have those accessories in the lifeboat before you commence the voyage?
- In some ships.
- 51 13360. Does the superintendent of the Board of Trade usually examine the lifeboats?
- Yes.
- 52 13361. Does he see whether or not the necessary equipment is in the lifeboat or available for it?
- Sometimes you are told off to go with him, and if he asks for a certain thing you have to lift it out and show it to him.
- 53 1336. Have you had experience of a shipwreck before?
- Yes.
- 54 13363. Was that in 1898?
- Yes.
- 55 13364. What was the ship that was wrecked
- The "[Veendam](#)," belonging to the Holland-America Line.
- 56 13365. You were at that time an A.B. on the "[St. Louis](#)"?
- Yes.
- 57 13366. Did you from the "St. Louis" rescue the passengers on the "Veendam"?
- Yes.
- 58 13367. I want you to tell my Lord what kind of sea you had at the time.
- It had been a hard blow and we had a very heavy swell; first we were down underneath the bilge of the ship and then up, catching hold of the children and putting them into the boat.
- 59 13368. Will you explain to his Lordship how your lifeboats behaved in that sea?
- They behaved splendidly.
- 60 The Commissioner:
I cannot sit here to inquire into the circumstances of another wreck which happened twelve or fourteen years ago.
- 61 Mr. Scanlan:
I have been contending that lifeboats can be successfully manned even in a heavy sea if there is a proper crew.
- 62 The Commissioner:
Well ask him that question.
- 63 13369. (*Mr. Scanlan.*) Yes, My Lord. (*To the witness.*) In your experience can a lifeboat be kept afloat in a heavy sea if she is properly manned and provisioned?
- Yes, as long as she is not overloaded with too many passengers.
- 64 What would you consider a sufficient crew for a lifeboat?
- 65 The Commissioner:
Would not that depend on the size of the lifeboat?
- 66 13370. (*Mr. Scanlan - To the witness.*) For a lifeboat of the size of the boats you had on the "Titanic"?
- To go away to rescue any people from another ship in distress you want between eight and ten men in the

lifeboat.

67 13371. (*The Commissioner.*) I suppose if you put eight or ten men in the lifeboat to man it you could take fewer passengers?

- You could take from 30 to 40.

68 13372. But I suppose if you only took a crew of three or four you could then take more passengers?

- Oh, yes.

69 13373. (*Mr. Scanlan.*) Could three or four by any possibility manage a lifeboat in a heavy sea?

- No.

70 13374. Do you know about the practice in regard to providing glasses for look-out men. Is it usual on other ships?

- No. I do not think it is.

71 13375. For the man in the crow's-nest?

- No.

72 13376. Were you on the "Oceanic"?

- Yes.

73 13377. Were glasses provided there?

- Yes.

74 13378. Is it usual to station look-out men in the ships you have experience of in the bows?

- Yes.

75 13379. As well as in the crow's-nest?

- Yes.

76 13380. (*The Commissioner.*) Always in foggy weather or hazy weather.

77 13381. (*Mr. Scanlan.*) Is it usual when there is ice about?

- No.

78 Examined by Mr. ROCHE.

79 13382. The occasions you are speaking of when you like to have eight or ten men are when you are going away on an accident boat for some special service?

- Yes, to the rescue.

80 13383. On this occasion, when the ship is being emptied as far as possible of passengers and other people, you had stewards on board your boat?

- Yes.

81 13384. And firemen?

- No.

82 13385. If you take eight or ten able seamen you will have, as my Lord has pointed out, so much less room for passengers and, of course, other persons, such as stewards or firemen?

- Yes.

83 13386. For ordinary purposes, that is to say, for rowing a boat and so forth, the stewards and firemen take their turn at the oars with the other men?

- Yes.

84 13387. And you find them quite competent for that purpose?

- Yes, some of them.

85 Examined by Mr. LEWIS.

86 13388. How do you account for not knowing the number of your boat?

- I had to go on duty on the morning of the 18th, and I went off to my station on the poop and we did not have any boat muster, and I did not take any notice on the list of the number of my boat. I did not go to the forecastle to find out. The list was in the forecastle.

87 13389. It is rather an important position for a quartermaster, is it not?

- Yes.

88 13390. And you would be expected to know your number even more than an A.B., would you not?

- No, not more.

89 13391. Is it customary for you to look at your boat list?
- Yes.

90 13392. Do the other men ask your advice at all? You are of a higher rank than an A.B.?
- Yes, but they do not ask any advice about anything.

91 13393. And you should make yourself acquainted with your boat number?
- Yes, had I known.

92 13394. Did you immediately go on deck when you were wakened?
- I went up on the forewell deck and asked what was the matter. I saw a lot of men passengers there, and I saw the ice on the deck, and they pointed it out to me: "Look at that" they said. "We have just struck an iceberg." Then I went down below and woke my two mates up, and then I dressed and walked on the bridge to await orders from the Captain.

93 13395. Did you have time to get your kit bag?
- No, I took that up when I went down to get my knife.

94 13396. Did you place your kit bag in the boat?
- I had two sets of underwear in my bag which I had never unpacked. I threw it into the first boat I came to when I was told to get into the boat.

95 13397. That was the boat you left in?
- Yes.

96 13398. What happened to your kit bag?

97 The Commissioner:
Does it matter what happened to the kit bag?

98 The Witness:
I never saw it.

99 13399. (*Mr. Lewis.*) It would be a good size, would it not - a good long bag?
- Not for the two sets of underwear I had.

100 13400. Is it not the fact that it was pitched off the "Carpathia" when the boat reached there?
- That is right.

101 Examined by Sir ROBERT FINLAY.

102 13401. You have spoken about having eight or ten men for a lifeboat of a certain size, but I think you said that was for rescuing people from another ship?
- Yes.

103 13402. That is a very different job from what it was this time?
- Yes.

104 13403. There was no sea on?
- No.

105 13404. Just one other question. You were asked whether a lifeboat properly manned could keep afloat all right even in a heavy sea?
- Yes.

106 13405. The real difficulty in a heavy sea is getting the lifeboat down, is it not?
- That is the real difficulty.

107 13406. And it is a nasty job if there is a heavy sea?
- Yes.

108 13407. (*The Commissioner.*) Can you tell me - do not tell me unless you are able to tell me, but if you can tell me let me know - what was the carrying capacity of No. 9 lifeboat?
- I really do not know.

109 (The Witness withdrew.)