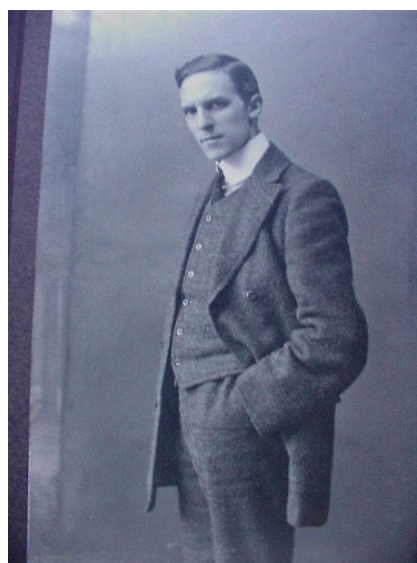


A QUIET SEA
RMS TITANIC



THE GUARANTEE GROUP

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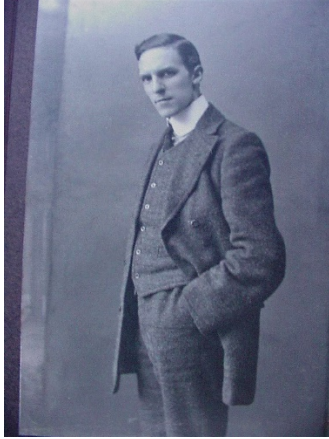
Harland & Wolff of Belfast employed about 15,000 workers with 3,000 engaged in building Titanic. Eight exceptional employees were chosen to tend to the ship on her maiden voyage. Known as the Guarantee Group, they were headed by Thomas Andrews, one of the principle naval architects responsible for designing Titanic.



Thomas Andrews

Photo credit: National Museum Northern Ireland

The Guarantee Group was on board to troubleshoot any problems, and to gather information and recommend improvements for the next ship of the class, Britannic. The Guarantee Group consisted of draftsmen, electrical engineers, joiners, apprentice electricians and plumbers, and they were selected for their skills and professionalism. The youngest, Ennis Watson, 18, was an electrician's apprentice and won a number of awards for his work. After Titanic collided with the iceberg, Andrews inspected the damage and determined her chances of survival. Knowing she was doomed he and his small group went about urging evacuation and inspecting for open portlights to slow the rate of flooding. The electricians went to the engine spaces to keep the lights burning as long as possible. Little is known of their work that night, and what they did perished with them.



Electrical Engineer
William Parr
Photo credit: David Marks

In tragic contrast to the efforts of the Guarantee Group, are the illogical actions taken by 2nd officer Charles Lightoller. Fearing that fully loaded lifeboats would buckle (they were weight tested in excess of capacity and approved), he decided to open a side shell gangway door several decks below the boat deck. This, he believed, would be safer for loading passengers after the lifeboats were afloat and alongside the ship. Not considering Titanic to be badly damaged, Lightoller took this ill-conceived course of action. The men sent to open the door inexplicably never returned, resulting in a short-handed crew to launch the lifeboats. Confusing orders redirected passengers from the boat deck to the decks below, then back up again, costing valuable time and further delaying evacuation. Once the sea reached the open gangway door, the rate of flooding markedly increased and there was barely enough time to launch the boats before the ship foundered.

The technical portion of this project will determine how much longer Titanic would have survived had the gangway door remained closed. Would have she remained afloat until the rescue ship Carpathia arrived, and how would this have affected the rescue?