Titanic

Titanic was launched in Belfast on the 31st September 1911 at the Belfast Shipyards of Harland and Wolff.

The ship was 11 storeys high, 92.5 feet wide and 1/6 of a mile long. Her tonnage was 46,000 and the engine room was capable of generating 55,000 horsepower.

The ship was meant to be ‘unsinkable’ because of the sixteen watertight bulkheads which ran across the ship dividing it into sections.

After launching, ten months were spent in fitting her out and provisioning her for her maiden voyage to New York.

With around 2,200 passengers on board, the Titanic set sail. She made a stop at Cherbourg, France and the next day Queenstown, Southern Ireland. She then headed for New York.

Sunday, April 14, 1912

It was a calm moonless night, the temperature was just about at the freezing mark. Inside, the first and second class passengers were enjoying a dinner in the warm, lively atmosphere.

Meanwhile in the wireless room, Jack Phillips and Harold Bride were busy receiving ice warnings from other ships in the area. These messages were passed on to Captain Smith and the officers, who regarded them as normal warnings for this time of year, and no threat to Titanic. When the Titanic came in contact with Cape Race, Newfoundland, around 9:30 p.m., the wireless room became very busy sending passenger's routine messages to friends, relatives and business contacts. It was during this time that the most important ice warnings ignored. Between 9.00 AM and 11 PM on the 14th, Titanic receives at least six ice warnings from other ships in the North Atlantic.

Up in the crows nest, Frederick Fleet was staring into the darkness. It was around 11:30 p.m. on a very cold, calm moonless night when he noticed a black object immediately in their path. He knew it was ice!

On the bridge, First Officer Murdoch ordered "full speed astern" and "hard a' starboard". Slowly the ship began to turn and it looked as if it was going to clear the ice when they heard a strange scraping noise. Murdoch knew they had hit the iceberg. He then ordered the watertight doors shut.

Titanic's watertight doors sealed all of her 16 compartments.
Over 200 feet of the ship was sliced open, and the first six watertight compartments were flooding. At 12.05 Captain Smith ordered the boats to be uncovered and the passengers mustered on deck.

Understanding that the ship was doomed, Captain Smith ordered evacuation. Their greatest problem was that the Titanic only carried enough lifeboats for about half of the 2,200 people on board. Outdated British Trade regulations required 16 lifeboats for any vessel over 10,000 tons. Meanwhile in the wireless room, the wireless operators were sending distress calls indicating Titanic's position.

The Titanic sent many distress flares, some seen by the steamer the Californian which could have saved many lives on the Titanic if only she had responded. This controversy was investigated and later became a matter for trial.

The first lifeboat was lowered at 12.45 AM and the last at 2.05.

At some point, the ship's orchestra took up position outside the First Class entrance. Hoping that their playing will calm the passengers and avoid a riotous panic from erupting.

On the sinking Titanic, there was much controversy over the issue of several lifeboats leaving the ship half full.

In its last minutes the ship was almost perpendicular. Prior to 1985 few people believed those accounts of the sinking which had the ship break in two before disappearing. First the bow slid to the ocean floor two miles below. The stern hung in the air for approximately two minutes before it too glided beneath the surface.

She went under at 2:20 a.m., almost 3 hours after striking the ice. Shortly after, all the cries stopped. All that was left were the lifeboats and blackness.

The steamer Carpathia was one of the ships closest to the Titanic racing to her rescue, but those on board knew they would not make it on time. At 4:00 a.m., those aboard one of the Titanic's lifeboat spotted the Carpathia's lights on the horizon.