

IN THE HIGH COURTS OF JUSTICE

Friday, 31st October, 1913.

IN THE MATTER OF THE "OCEANIC  
STEAMSHIP COMPANY, LIMITES, for  
Limitation of its liability as  
Owners of the S.S. "TITANIC".

Before

C. G. PHILLIMORE, Esq.,

(Barrister at Law)

Commissioner

Examination of Alfred Shiers.



DEPOSITION by ALFRED SHIERS Produced sworn and  
examined the 31st day of October 1913, under and by  
virtue of a Commission issued out of the District Court  
of the United States of the Southern District of New  
York in a certain cause therein depending and at issue  
entitled "In the Matter of the Petition of The Oceanic  
"Steam Navigation Company Limited, as owners of the  
"Steamship "Titanic" for limitation of its Liability".



ROYAL COURTS OF JUSTICE.

Friday, 31st October, 1913.

IN THE MATTER OF THE "OCEANIC STEAMSHIP COMPANY,

LIMITED, for limitation of its liability

and of an Order of  
as Owners of S.S. "TITANIC"/The District Court  
of the United States of the Southern District of New  
York dated 24th September 1913 and a Commission issued  
Before: out of the said Court on the 14th day of October 1913 to  
G.G. Phillimore Esqre Barrister at Law.  
G. G. PHILLIMORE, Esq., (Barrister at Law)

Commissioner.

EXAMINATION OF ALFRED SHIERS, of 5 Peel Street  
Southampton, aged 29 years.

ALFRED SHIERS -- Sworn.

EXAMINED BY Mr. SCANLAN.

Q You were a fireman on the "Titanic"?

A Yes.

Q Had you been in the employment of the Petitioners before  
going on this voyage in the "Titanic"?

A In the White Star Company?

Q Yes.

A Yes.

Q For how long had you been in their employment?

A Two trips in the "Oceanic".

Q Are you still in their employment?

A No.

Q You joined the "Titanic" at Southampton, did you not?

A Yes.

Q Your work was in No. 4 stokehold?

A Yes.

Q Of No. 3 boiler section?

A Yes.



Q Can you recall the hours on which you were on duty on Sunday the 14th April; you were on duty on this Sunday, the day the accident happened to the "Titanic" from 12 to 4 in the morning, I think?

A 4 to 8.

Q That is 4 to 8 in the evening?

A And 4 to 8 in the morning as well.

Q And then you were off duty for a while?

A From 8 till 4 in the afternoon.

Q When did you go on duty in the evening?

A At 4 o'clock.

Q When did your duty finish that day?

A At 8 o'clock.

Q I think the "Titanic" had six boiler sections?

A Yes.

Q In each section there were five boilers?

A Yes, I believe so; I would not be sure about the other sections.

Q In your section, No. 3, how many were there?

A Five boilers.

Q You went off duty on the Sunday at 8 o'clock, was it?

A Yes.

Q When you went off duty on the Sunday morning were all the fires lighted?

A No.

Q Can you tell me how many boiler fires were unlighted on the Sunday morning when you went off?

A Three main boilers and five auxilliary boilers.

Q Can you recall in which section these were?

A In section 2.

Q That was the next section to you?

A Yes.

Q In the course of the voyage from Southampton up till the



Sunday morning had those additional boilers been fired at all, lighted?

A Yes, in the night on our watch they were lighted: on the Sunday night.

Mr. DUKE: He did not say they had not been before.

Mr. SCANLAN: Had those been lighted before?

A No.

Q To your knowledge they were lighted on the Sunday?

A Yes, on the Sunday.

Q You came on duty again at 4 o'clock in the afternoon?

A Yes.

Q When did it come to your knowledge that those boilers had been lighted?

A The engineer came through and told us they were connected up at 7 o'clock.

Mr. DUKE: We cannot have conversations; I object to his making a statement of a conversation with a third person.

Mr. SCANLAN: When did it come to your knowledge that those boilers had been lighted?

A They were alight when I went on watch.

Q You know that?

A Yes.

Q Do you know of your own knowledge whether or not those boilers had been lighted at any previous time during the voyage?

A No.

Q They were not lighted?

A No.

Q Is it the case that after boilers which have not been in use before are lighted they require to be connected up?

A The main boilers require to be connected up, but all boilers do not.

Q Were those main boilers?



A The three that were alight that night were main boilers.

Q And those you say were main boilers that were not lighted before?

A Yes.

Q Were you superintended in your work by a foreman or engineer?

A A leading fireman.

Q Did you get orders from the engineer?

A No, we never got any orders not to fire so quick; they might come through from the engine room.

Q Do you know when the three additional boilers that you have spoken of were connected up?

A At 7 o'clock in the night.

Q How did it come to your knowledge that they were connected up?

A The engineer said they were.

Q Which engineer?

A I do not know his name; Larry they called him; that is the only name I knew him by, a tall Welshman.

Q Did he tell you?

A Yes.

Q I think all the engineers that were on the "Titanic" are now dead?

A Yes.

Q And this engineer, of course, perished in the wreck of the "Titanic"?

A Yes.



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Q Where were you when you got this information?

A In No. 4 stokehold.

Q What was said to you?

A "Ease down firing."

Q And what was said about connecting up?

A They said: "Connect the three extra boilers up or three more boilers."

Q Do you know anything of the speed at which the "Titanic" was run on Saturday the 14th April?

A No.

Q Do you know whether ~~XXXX~~ with additional boilers fired and lighted the speed can be increased?

A It can be.

Q Is there any other purpose for lighting additional boilers.

Mr. DUKE: I object. That is a leading question.

Mr. SCANLAN: For what purpose are additional boilers fired and lighted?

A I could not answer that question. I do not know.

Q Do you know whether with additional boilers lighted the speed can be increased?

A I believe that is what the purpose is. I do not know for sure.

Q I think you remember about the collision with the iceberg?

A Yes.

Q You had been, as you have told us, off duty from 8 o'clock on the Sunday evening?

A Yes.

Q Do you remember the hour at which the ship collided?

A 20 minutes to 12.

Q At that time where were you in the ship?

A In my bunk.

Q I think you were reading?



A Yes, in my bunk.

Q How did you know there had been a collision?

A I could not very well be off from knowing when I was awake in my bunk.

Q What did you feel?

A A jar; the shake of the ship.

Q What did you do then?

A I came out of the forecastle and went up on deck.

Q Did you immediately leave your bunk and go up on deck?

A Yes.

Q When you went on deck what part of the ship did you go to?

A On to the forecastle.

Q The forecastle head?

A Yes.

Q Did you see anything on the deck?

A On the well decks.

Q On the fore well deck?

A Yes.

Q What did you see there?

A Some ice.

Q Did you see that ice immediately after you left your bunk and went on to the fore well deck?

A As soon as I got on the fore well deck I saw it.

Q After you observed that ice did you leave the forecastle deck or the fore well deck?

A I looked over the side.

Q You went to the side?

A Yes.

Q Which side of the ship did you go to?

A The starboard side.

Q Can you tell us how long this was after you felt the shock of the collision?



A Less than five minutes.

Q At that time had the ship any way on her?

A A slight way.

Q In all this space of time--you put it at five minutes--had the ship been going forward?

A She just seemed to be moving when I looked over the side.

Q Can you give us any idea what distance she would have travelled during those four or five minutes?

A I cannot say that.

Q Would she have travelled a few hundred yards?

Mr. DUKE: I object.

Mr. SCANLAN: Then I will not press it. (To the Witness)  
Did you see when you looked over the starboard side what the ship had collided with?

A Yes.

Q What was it?

A An iceberg.

Q Where was the iceberg?

A When I saw it it was on our starboard quarter.

Q And where were you?

A On the fore well deck.

Q Is that pretty close to the bows?

A Yes.

Q Would you describe to us the iceberg as you saw it?

A It seemed like a mist. I could just see the dim outline of it. That is all I could see of it. It was hazy. I could only just see the outline of it.

Q Just tell us about this mist or haze. Had you observed it before you went over to the starboard side from the fore well deck?

A No. I never took any notice of it.



Q Was it then that you observed for the first time this mist or haze?

A Yes.

Q What did you see of the iceberg?

A Just the outline of it; that is all. that I could see.

Q Did ~~you~~ this mist or haze prevent you from seeing it?

A I could not see it distinctly.

Q Was the mist or haze which you observed extensive?

A It seemed to be a haze and you could only just see the outline of the berg.

Q Did the haze extend far around?

A I never took any notice how far around. I was only just looking at it.

Q Was the haze behind the ship?

A Yes, it was astern of the ship when I saw it where the berg was.

Q Could you tell--if you cannot it does not matter--how far the haze extended round?

A I cannot tell you that. I did not take any notice of it.

Q Did the haze obscure the iceberg?

A I could only just see the outline of it.

Q How did the haze appear to you with reference to the water--to the sea?

A In the distance where the berg was I could just see the outline of it. I did not look any further around. The haze was both sides of it.

Q Both sides of the berg or of the ship?

A It was just a thick haze. I could only just discern the shape of the berg.

Q Did the haze extend high or was it low-lying?

A I could not see how high it went.

Q Was the top of the berg seen more clearly----



Mr. DUKE: I object to that question as leading.

Mr. SCANLAN: Did this haze obstruct your view of one part of the berg more than of any other part?

A No. I could only just make out the shape of the berg through it.

Q Through the haze?

A Yes, it was dim. I could not see whether it was any colour or anything. There was only just the outline of it which seemed to be in a bit of a haze.

Q You could not see whether the iceberg had any colour, you say?

A No, I could not see that.

Q Tell us about the condition of the sea at the time?

A Smooth.

Q Did you observe that when you were looking over the starboard side from the fore well deck?

A Yes, I could see that.

Q Had the sea any movement at all?

A Only when we were in the boats; just a slight swell.

Q So far as you observed from your position on the deck was the sea smooth or rough?

A Calm.

Q Was there any wind at all?

A No.

Q At the time you came first after the collision to the fore well deck did you see any watchman, any look-out man, at the stem ahead?

A No. I did not go on to the fore-castle head.

Q Had you a boat station?

A Yes.

Q To what boat were you appointed?

A No. 3 was the boat I was supposed to be in.

Q Did you go off in that boat?

A No.



Q What boat did you leave the ship in?

A No. 5.

Q And No. 5 was not your boat?

A No.

Q Did you know what your boat station was?

A Yes.

Q Did you go to your own boat?

A Yes.

Q Why did not you go away on your own boat?

A I stood alongside the davits and I was ordered into No. 5 boat.

Q Although No. 3 was your boat?

A Yes.

Q Can you tell us how many passengers were taken away from the ship in this No. 5 boat?

A 40 odd.

Q What crew had you in No. 5?

A I can only recollect there was me and another fireman and a quartermaster and an officer, Mr. Pitman.

Q Were those all the crew you had?

A That was all that was pulling the oars.

Q Was that a sufficient crew for this boat?

A No.

Q Could this boat No. 5 have accommodated any more people than you had in her?

A I do not know what the boat is supposed to carry.

Q Just say if you know.

Mr. DUKE: He is not a seaman; he is a fireman.

Mr. SCANLAN: Had you room in the boat for any more people?

A I was in the bow of her, and I could not move any further.

Q You had nothing to do with bringing the passengers into the boat, had you?



A No, I stood alongside.

Q Was there a light in your boat No. 5?

A I did not look to see.

Q Was there any light in the boat during the time from your leaving the "Titanic" until you got to the "Carpathia"?

A We had no light; there was none alight.

Q Had this boat No. 5 a compass?

A I do not know.

Q Had there been any boat drill or boat muster on the "Titanic" in the course of that voyage?

A No.

Q Not any at all?

A No.

Q Previously to this disaster had you been in the employment of the Union Castle Company?

A Yes.

Q And the Royal Mail Company?

A Yes.

Q Did you on the ships of those Companies have boat drills?

A Yes.

Q And boat musters?

A Yes.

Q How often did you have them?

A Every week.

Q When you ~~XXXX~~ have those drills what is the practice? What is it you do exactly?

A Pull away the lifeboats and the best manned boat gets 5s.

Q Do you swing the lifeboats out?

A Yes.

Q And bring them back again?

A Yes.



Q Can you tell me whether or not the whole of the members of the crew take part in the boat drill?

A Yes, in the Castle Company and the Royal Mail Company.

Q In both of those Companies?

A Yes.

Q Firemen as well as sailors?

A Yes: firemen, stewards and sailors.

Q After you got into the lifeboat No. 5 and got waterborne did you row away from the ship?

A Yes.

Q What distance?

A About 150 or 200 yards.

Q How long did you remain there?

A All the time until we were pulling back and the officers said we had to lay on our oars. We stopped there all the time.

Q Did someone suggest you should go back?

A After the ship sank.

Q Did you pull back?

A We pulled back a short distance, but there was a commotion with the women on board.

Q For what purpose did you pull back?

A There were some people in the water.

Q Was it on purpose to get to them?

A Yes, to get there to see if we could pick any of them up.

Q Did you persist in trying to get to them?

A No. The officer told us to lay on our oars.

Q Then did you row away?

A No, we stopped where we were.

Q At that time when you were asked to row back before ~~XXXX~~ the commotion of which you spoke occurred, did you know whether



you could have taken any of the people on board?

A We were going to try to.

Q Had you a place for them?

A I suppose there was room. The officer gave the order.

Q Did you remain in this boat near the scene of the wreck until the "Titanic" actually sank?

A Yes.

Q And disappeared from view?

A Yes.

Q About what o'clock was this?

A 20 <sup>past</sup> ~~was~~ two as near as I could make it out when she sank.

Q After that did you row away?

A No, we stopped there.

Q All the time?

A Yes.

Q Were you picked up by the "Carpathia"?

A Yes.

Q In that position?

A We had to row to the "Carpathia" in the morning in daylight.

Q How far had <sup>you</sup> to row to the "Carpathia"?

A About half a mile, I should think.

Q Did you remain in this one position in the vicinity of the ~~xxx~~ ship until daylight broke?

A Yes.

Q As soon as daylight broke did you observe any icebergs?

A Yes.

Q <sup>Was this</sup> ~~where~~ while you were in the vicinity of the ship near where the "Titanic" sank?

A Yes.

Q How many icebergs did you observe?

A I could not count them.

Q Did you observe in the morning when daylight broke the iceberg you had seen immediately after the collision?

A Yes.



Q Did you note its size?

A Its height was about 60 or 70 feet I should think.

Q Did you note anything about the colour of this or any of the other icebergs in the morning?

A They all seemed about the same to me.

Q Just tell us what colour they were?

A A whitey blue.

Q Was that the colour of all the icebergs you noticed in the morning?

A Yes. It was not blue and it was not white.

Q Had you seen icebergs before in the course of your travels on the seas?

A No.

Q You had never seen an iceberg before?

A No, I had never seen one before.

Q How did you know that one of those was the iceberg that you had seen the night before?

A By the shape of it. It was the biggest one there was about there.

Q What distance were you from it at that time in the morning?

A 300 yards.

Q Were there many other icebergs about you?

A Yes.

Q How many?

A I cannot tell you. There was a field of them.

Q Would there be half a dozen?

A More than that.

Q Were they near one another or separated from one another by any distance?

A They were all separated by the field. Some of them were about 3 feet or so out of the water and extended a long distance.



Q Were all those icebergs which you saw in the morning of the same colour and general appearance?

A Yes.

Q And is that the appearance you observed--whitey blue?

A Yes.

Q Does that describe it as well as you can tell the Commissioner?

A Yes, as well as I can tell you the colour.

Q Immediately after the collision you have told us there was no wind and that the sea was smooth. Was there any change of the condition of the water in the morning while you were in the lifeboat No. 5?

A Yes; it started blowing in the morning; a breeze came up in the morning.

Q Was there any haze in the morning?

A No.

Q No haze whatever?

A No.

Q How did you identify in the morning the iceberg which the "Titanic" had hit the night before?

A By the shape of it.

Q Was it discussed amongst the crew.

Mr. DUKE: I object.

A Yes.

Mr. SCANLAN: Had you any difficulty in determining which was the iceberg you had struck before?

A No, not by the shape. It was the biggest one there was there, and it was the shape.



CROSS-EXAMINED BY MR. DUKE.

Q What was the length of it?

A Of what?

Q Of the iceberg you identified?

A I could not say the length of it.

Q Can you tell me within 10 yards?

A It was too big; I was not close enough to tell you the length.

Q Tell me what was the height of it.

A About 60 feet I should say.

Q What shape was it?

A It was a bluff, and came up to a point like the Rock of Gibraltar.

Q Is that a common shape for icebergs?

A I had not see them before.

Q You do not know whether it is a common shape for icebergs?

A No.

Q Is it your idea that that iceberg had remained stationary all night?

A We were drifting about all the night.

Q Did not you row at all?

A No.

Q How did you keep your course?

A We had no course to keep.

Q Mr. Pitman was in the boat?

A Yes.

Q Were there any other boats in your company?

A Yes.

Q What were they?

A There was one which had Mr. Hogg in it.

Q Were not the men in those boats rowing?

A No, they were tied alongside of us.

Q That was the boat which was tied alongside of you?



A Yes.

Q Is that the only boat that was thereabout?

A That is the only one I saw.

Q The whole of the boats were in the same vicinity when the "Carpathia" came in sight?

A Those were the only two that laid there all night.

Q How far off were the other boats?

A I do not know.

Q Did not you see anything of them?

A Only of the two boats that were laid alongside.

Q With regard to the manning of your boat, you were in it?

A Yes.

Q Mr. Pitman was in charge?

A Yes.

Q Was there a quartermaster?

A Yes.

Q And a steward?

A I do not know about a steward; I never saw one.

Q Do you know one way or the other?

A I only know the men that were pulling the oars when we pulled back to the ship, back to the "Carpathia".

Q Just let me read to you what you said before, when the thing was more recent. You were asked before Lord Mersey who was in No. 5 boat, and you said that you were, and then you were asked who else, and you said one other fireman, a steward and a quartermaster; so you see at that time you said that, and that was probably right, was it not?

A There were three men pulling the oars, and the officer, I never noticed the steward.

Q This was what you said about it shortly after, on the 9th May within a very few weeks afterwards. You were asked who was there beside you, and your answer was, one other



fireman, a steward and a quartermaster; you have no doubt you said that, have you, as it is in the shorthand note?

A There was a kicking business about the steward; he would not pull an oar in the boat.

Q But he was there?

A Yes, he was there.

Q These were the members of the crew who were there?

A Yes.

Q You seem to have had a good deal of experience in boat work on board these liners?

A Yes.

Q For how many years?

A Since 1901.

Q That is something more than 12 years?

A Yes.

Q During all that time you had been accustomed to boats?

A Yes.

Q With regard to boat drill<sup>ing</sup>, where does it usually take place?

A In Southampton <sup>and</sup> every week ~~==~~ when you are at sea in the Union Castle Company.

Q Is there any other Company that you know of that had a drill every week at sea?

A Yes.

Q Which is that?

A The Royal Mail Company.

Q Any other?

A No.

Q Are those all long voyages?

A Yes.

Q How many times have you crossed the Atlantic?

A Three times.

Q Have you ever had boat drill at sea while you were



4  
5  
crossing the Atlantic?

A No.

Q Not in any Line?

A No -- I do not know what the Atlantic means; it means right round in every direction.

Q You understand what I mean by crossing the Atlantic, I mean going to North America. On a voyage between any English port or any United States port or Canadian port have you ever had boat drill on the voyage?

A No.

Q Now, how long does it take before you can connect a boiler for service with the engines after you have fired her up?

A That all depends, six hours or seven hours or eight hours; it all depends how <sup>they</sup> ~~the~~ fire the boiler.

Q It might be as much as twelve hours?

A Yes.

Q Were you fireman in any of the stokeholds where the boilers were which you say were connected up?

A I was in the next stokehold to it.

Q I do not think you follow my question. Were you fireman in the stokehold where any boiler was served which you say was connected up?

A No, I was not in that stokehold.

Q You do not know when those boilers were fired up?

A No.

Q Now, I want to ask you about the iceberg. The first you saw of the iceberg she was astern of the ship; is that so?

A Off her starboard quarter.

Q I thought you said she was astern.

A No, off her starboard quarter.

Q How far was she from you do you say think?

A About two ships' length from where I stood.



Q You said something about a haze; was it your impression that the iceberg produced a haze round itself, in its own immediate neighbourhood; that is to say that it condensed the moisture in the atmosphere about it. ~~XXXX~~ Was that your impression?

A It looked to be in a haze to me.

Q Was the idea that you got that the iceberg there was causing a haze in the air?

A No, it looked hazy to me where I was.

Q It looked hazy about the iceberg I understand you to say?

A Where the iceberg was.

Q That is what I mean; it looked hazy, ~~where I was~~. Do you think your eyes had got accustomed to the light at that time?

A Yes.

Q How long had you been on deck?

A About 4 minutes.

Q You had been reading in your berth had not you?

A Yes.

Q It does have a little effect coming out of the light into the night, does it not?

A Yes, a bit.

Q In other directions than that in the neighbourhood of the iceberg it was a fine clear night, was it not?

A I never took any notice of it.

Q Do you think you did not?

A Some time afterwards.

Q You made a statement did you not at Southampton?

A Yes.

Q And did you say this: "I was not on duty when the vessel struck the iceberg, I was in my bunk, I did not get up at once, I went on talking as to what had happened"; did you say that?

A No; I went up on the deck.

Q But while you were lying in your bunk?



A We went back to our bunks to talk about it.

Q "I first went to the forecastle head and on the fore well deck", was that right?

A Under the forecastle head.

Q "On the fore well deck and saw some ice there"?

A Yes.

Q "I looked over the side and saw the iceberg which was off the starboard quarter"?

A Yes.

Q "The ship had almost stopped and the iceberg was just discernable": is that right?

A Yes.

Q "It was a clear starry night"?

A Overhead.

Q That was right?

A Yes.

Q "After I had had a look at the iceberg I went back to the forecastle:" Is that right?

A Yes.

Q Did you look over the side and see whether the ship had any way?

A She just had way! she was just moving.

Q Did you have a look over the side to see?

A Yes, I had a look over the side.

Q And you could see the surface of the sea?

A Yes.

Q Could you see the glitter of it?

A I saw the phosphorous that was coming up in the water.

Q And you could see that the ship had very little way?

A Well, she just seemed to me to be moving.

Q You thought you could discern there were some slight signs of motion?

A Yes.



Q What were they?

A There were bubbles as the ship was going along.

Q You thought that you could see bubbles on the surface?

A Yes.

Q Did you know there was a boat drill at Southampton?

A There was no boat drill.

Q Do you know one way or the other whether there was a boat drill at Southampton?

A We had no boat drill.

Q I am not asking you whether you took part; what I am asking you is whether there was a boat drill or whether you knew there was a boat drill in the harbour at Southampton?

A I do not know.

RE-EXAMINED BY Mr. SCANLAN.

Q You were asked by Mr. Duke how many times you had been across the Atlantic; he meant the North Atlantic route; that is the route you were travelling on the "Titanic" on this occasion, and you said only three times?

A Yes.

Q On all those three occasions were you in the employment of the White Star Company?

A Yes.

Q In the White Star Company you never had boat drill?

A No.

Mr. DUKE: At sea?

A At sea.

Mr. SCANLAN: You never had boat drill at sea?

A No.

Q In every other company you were employed in had you boat drill?

A Yes.

Q It was put to you by Mr. Duke that you were not in the stokehold where the additional boilers were fired?



A No, I was in the next stokehold.

Q Do those two stokeholds communicate?

A You can look through or walk through.

Q Are you and the people in the other stokehold firing the same furnaces?

A Yes, the other end of the boilers: not in No. 3 stokehold.

Q When you speak of the other boilers having been lighted up do you know of your own knowledge that they were?

A Yes.

ALFRED SHIERS.

31st October 1913.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Testimony was taken before me this day being taken down and reduced into writing by Charles Allen Hersee of 22 Chancery Lane London W C. Shorthand Writer who was duly sworn for that purpose and the said Alfred Shiers who gave the same after being duly sworn for that purpose has signed the same after hearing it read over to him.

Examination taken reduced to writing)  
and by the witness subscribed and )  
sworn to this 31st day of October )  
1913. Before me. )

(Sgd) GEORGE G. PHILLIMORE.

Barrister at Law,

1 Mitre Court Buildings,

Temple, London, E.C.

Commissioner,

Octr 31st 1913.