And the Band Played On...

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CHRISTOPHER WARD

HODDER & STOUGHTON

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For my mother, Johann Law Hume Costin,
known to all her friends as Jackie

And for Jock, the father she never knew

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'I found a new hope today in the most unexpected of all places – in the cemetery at Halifax at the grave of a man named Jock Law Hume. The Jock Humes of this world were immediately apparent [on 9/11 at the World Trade Center] helping to keep the crowds calm and prevent panic . . . asking nothing for themselves. Hume – to me he came to represent all of them. They will come out again, if they are needed. And it's enough for me to know that they are near us, though we don't always see them there. They are hope. They are the future.'

Charles Pellegrino, writing about the collapse of the twin towers of the World Trade Center in *Ghosts of Vesuvius*.

'No one was a greater favourite at school than Jock. Indeed everyone who knew the happy-faced lad will have felt a catch in their breath and a lump in their throat when they read that poor Jock had, 'like the Wanderer', gone through the darkness to his rest. Yet, withal, pride masters our grief, for the lad died a hero, his beloved violin clasped to his breast, playing in that last requiem for the passing soul of others and for his own.'

From 'The Last Hymn' – an anonymous appreciation of Jock Law Hume published in the *Dumfries & Galloway Standard*, 24 April 1912.

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Introduction

On the night of 14–15 April 1912, the White Star liner *Titanic* sank on its maiden voyage from Southampton to New York after colliding with an iceberg. Of the 1,497 passengers and crew who died in the North Atlantic that night only 306 bodies were recovered. One of them was my grandfather, Jock Hume, a violinist in the *Titanic*'s band. He was twenty-one.

His pay was stopped the moment the ship went down and two weeks later, his father received a bill for the White Star Line brass buttons and epaulettes on his uniform.

Many hundreds of books have been written about the *Titanic*. Nearly all of them, like films of the disaster, end with the ship, its stern vertical in the water, disappearing beneath the waves. This book begins where the lives of the passengers and crew end: with the aftermath. It is a shocking story of corporate callousness and cover-up, with powerful contemporary parallels. It is set in the context of a corrosive class system that was as ruthless in its discrimination in death as it was in life.

This book started out at the beginning of 2010 as one of those *Who Do You Think You Are?* family history projects intended only for my children and grandchildren and for my sister's family – not as a book about the *Titanic*. My sister had died four years earlier, our mother dying ten years before that. With a growing sense of my own mortality, I realised I

was now the only person who knew anything about the family, the only one able to put names to faces on the faded sepia pictures in the battered old suitcase in the attic.

It is a human story about the catastrophic consequences of the *Titanic* for two ordinary families in Dumfries, south-west Scotland, and how the tragedy has resonated down through generations of the families involved for nearly one hundred years. My mother, who was born six months after Jock's death and lived into her eighties, was never able to escape the shadow of the *Titanic*. This is also true of the family of the American millionaire Colonel J. J. Astor who, like Jock, died leaving behind an unborn child. It must be the same for other '*Titanic* families', too.

My grandmother, Mary Costin, was engaged to Jock Hume and they were to be married when the *Titanic* returned from its maiden voyage. Last year, I spent many days in Dumfries gathering information about the Costins and the Humes, who lived a few hundred yards away from each other. In the Ewart Library in Dumfries I delved through yellowing local newspapers and other records. In the National Archives of Scotland in Edinburgh I sifted through hundreds of bundles of old court records, each neatly tied with a pink silk ribbon. At night, I went online, accessing births, deaths and marriage registers and checking census records. I had to clear shelves in my study to make space for still more books on the *Titanic*, adding several feet to my already substantial *Titanic* library.

My part-time interest developed into a full-time fixation, my research project into a detective inquiry. What made Jock, a child prodigy, decide to leave home at fourteen to play in orchestras on passenger liners? The teenage violinist had seen most of the world before he was twenty, sailing

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across the Atlantic at least three times in the year before his death. I had not known this. The answers to these questions – and so many more – lay in the complex character of Jock's father, Andrew Hume. I had spent my life thinking of myself as a Ward and a Costin. It took my publisher to remind me that Andrew Hume was my great-grandfather and that I shared some DNA with him, an unwelcome discovery.

Another surprise was to meet a cousin I did not know I had: Yvonne Hume, granddaughter of Jock's younger brother, Andrew, who had just written *Dinner Is Served,* a book of *Titanic* recipes. There was a useful exchange of family memorabilia and a new friendship formed.

In August last year I flew to Halifax, Nova Scotia, where all the bodies recovered from the *Titanic* were brought by the cablelaying ship, *Mackay-Bennett*. It is in Halifax that Jock is buried in the beautiful Fairview Lawn Cemetery, along with 121 other *Titanic* dead. The Nova Scotia Archives and Records in University Avenue, Halifax, contain all the original coroner's reports on the dead. During my time in the archives, and in the Museum of the Atlantic, I discovered the answers to more uncomfortable questions and at the Nova Scotia Maritime Museum I was given the privilege of reading the log of the *Mackay-Bennett,* which gives a detailed account of the voyage of 'the ship of death', as it became known.

Researching and writing this book has been a painful personal journey and, although the book is now completed, I suspect the journey will continue, as many questions remain unanswered. And I feel at last that I know my grandfather, Jock. I found it difficult to picture him while I was growing up, not least because my mother never knew him, either. Everything one was told was second or third-hand.

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Thousands who lost fathers and grandfathers in the two world wars must share this alienating experience.

But I know now what good fun Jock was. I can see his smile and hear his laugh. A charming young man. And brave, too. Brave not only in the manner of his dying but, more important, in the manner of his living. For going to sea with his fiddle, aged fourteen, and playing so well that by the time he was twenty-one he had had the chance to play on the greatest ocean liner ever built.

It was his bad luck that it was the *Titanic*.

Christopher Ward, January 2011

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The Band Who Stayed Together

15 April 1912, 2.05 a.m.: on board the SS *Titanic*

Many brave things were done that night, but none more brave than by those few men playing minute after minute as the ship settled quietly lower and lower in the sea and the sea rose higher and higher to where they stood; the music they played serving alike as their own immortal requiem and their right to be recorded on the rolls of undying fame.

Lawrence Beesley, survivor, from *The Loss of the S.S. Titanic*

The moment eventually came when all eight members of the band knew that they could no longer play on. It wasn't because of the bitter cold, even though they had been on deck for almost an hour, overcoats and scarves thrown hastily over their bandsmen's tunics to provide some additional warmth. My grandfather, Jock Hume, at twenty-one the second youngest member of the orchestra, had only been able to lay his hands on a light raincoat in the desperate rush to reconvene the band on deck. He must have been pleasantly surprised to discover that, despite the lack of feeling in his hands and the difficulty of playing a violin while wearing a cork lifejacket and a purple muffler, he had managed to complete all five verses of 'Nearer My God To Thee' without missing a single note. Nor did the band stop

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playing even when most of the audience attending this impromptu performance had left – the usual indication to a band that it is time to pack up and go home. The women and children had been the first to leave – in the lifeboats. That was an hour ago. The remaining 1,500 passengers and crew were now carrying out the last order that Captain Smith would give in his long career at sea, namely to abandon ship. A nicety, this, when one considers that the only alternatives were being washed overboard or drowning below decks. Some delayed their departure to receive the last rites on the sloping deck from Father Thomas Byles, kneeling before him in the Act of Contrition as he gave them general absolution and exhorted them to meet their God. Only a mutinous few decided to stay with the ship, retiring to the First Class lounge to await their death with a large brandy in their hand.

Nor was the band intimidated by the relentless advance of the cold sea edging ever closer. None of them had given a moment's thought to their own safety when they came up on deck, and they did not do so now. They were not afraid. They were in this to the end.

The band stopped playing because, as the stricken ship reached its tipping point, even they could no longer hear themselves play above the deafening sound of the *Titanic*'s death throes. 'It was a noise no one had heard before and no one wishes to hear again,' said Colonel Archibald Gracie, a survivor who was in the water as the ship went down. 'It was stupefying, stupendous.'

The symphony of cacophony opened with the sound of breaking glass as the finest Waterford crystal goblets slid from polished mahogany shelves and smashed into a million pieces, covering the floors of the saloons with shards like

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diamonds. Then, seconds later, came the crash of breaking china as ten thousand plates broke away from their anchor points in the galleys of the First and Second Class kitchens and dining rooms: Royal Crown Derby in First Class (the White Star Line had haggled for weeks over the price), plain white china in Steerage. Not that such distinctions were important any more, the deafening noise drowning even the cries for help from the poor souls already in the water.

Now tables and chairs were on the move, some flying through the windows of the saloon, showering the band from behind with broken glass. In the dining saloon on D Deck a Steinway grand piano – one of six pianos on the ship – snapped its chains, killing a steward as it gathered speed across the dance floor, ending its last waltz upside down and broken in half, its guts spilling out in a final fortissimo of wire, wood and ivory.

But more frightening still was the death rattle of the ship itself. A reverberating rumble, followed by a deep groan louder than thunder and more terrifying than an earthquake, came from somewhere deep inside the bowels as, one by one, the *Titanic*'s twenty-nine boilers burst, tearing huge steel plates free from their rivets. Stokers were boiled alive where they stood, the ear-shattering blast of the superheated steam that engulfed them sparing them the sound of their own short shrieks of death.

So huge and heavy were the *Titanic*'s three anchors that a year before it had taken two teams of eight shire horses to pull each one on low-loaders to the Harland and Wolff shipyard. Now they were on the move again, straining their great chains to breaking point, with no assistance required this time from shire horses.

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Distress rockets exploded high in the starlit sky above the ship; now an explosion as loud as an artillery barrage announced the collapse of the forward funnel as the guy wires, unable to stand the extra strain, snapped, the steel hawsers snaking menacingly across the bridge deck. The whole ship shuddered again as the force of gravity ripped its steam turbine engine from its hardened steel mountings, sending it shrieking on an unstoppable journey through the ship on the first leg of its 8,500ft journey to the bottom of the Atlantic.

Wallace Hartley, the band master, just nodded at the musicians, which was his usual signal that they should stop playing now and put away their instruments; he followed this with his customary short respectful bow. Leaning forward, he had difficulty keeping his balance as the deck was now at a steep angle. The band huddled round their leader. 'Gentlemen, thank you all. A most commendable performance. Good night and good luck.' It is what he always said at the end of a performance and tonight would be no different. They shook hands with each other, according to witnesses. Hartley loosened the bow of his violin, placed it firmly in its case next to the instrument, and closed the lid. Then he wound the strap round his body until it was tight against his lifejacket, looping his belt through the strap. The extra buoyancy would increase his chances and, all being well, he would also save his favourite instrument. Jock Hume did the same with his violin, first putting a cloth over the strings to protect the polished wood, slipping the violin mute into his pocket. He kept his hand there for a few moments to warm his fingers, long enough to feel his watch and look at the time. It was 2.11 a.m. The bow of the ship was

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completely under water now, the icy water slapping the musicians' thighs. They moved further back towards the stern so that they could jump clear of the side.

It would have been Jock's style to volunteer to jump first, joking that it would be like a dip in the Mediterranean compared to swimming in a Scottish burn in summer. But Hartley, would have led the way, a leader to the last, hugging his violin case tightly against him to prevent it slipping off him as he leaped over the side. 'Good luck, boys,' he would have shouted. 'Keep close together, we'll have more chance that way.'

They had no chance at all, of course. But they did stay together.

As our brave bandsmen join the other 1,500 passengers and crew in the water, we must pause for a moment to understand what will now happen to them, in the last minutes of their lives. Contrary to the findings of two official inquiries, and the statements issued later in Halifax, Nova Scotia, by Dr W. D. Finn, the provincial coroner, very few people drowned that night. Most died from hypothermia. A few lucky ones died almost immediately from what is now known as CSR – 'cold shock response'. Charles Lightoller, the most senior officer to survive the sinking, described the experience of entering the water as 'like being stabbed by 1,000 knives'. He was in the sea for only a short time but it is clear he came close to dying from CSR.

Two world wars have increased our understanding of the effects of cold water on the human body as scientists searched for ways to save the lives of sailors and airmen who

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found themselves 'in the drink'. The Nazis set about their research with their usual precision and ruthlessness, building experimental cold water tanks in concentration camps to record the precise time it took someone to die depending on the temperature of the water and the body weight of the victim. There were no survivors among those selected for these experiments, just a slow, agonising death recorded by the click of a stopwatch and a small ink mark on a sheet of graph paper.

More research has been carried out in the years since the war. Life expectancy in cold water is now measured across a band of six temperature ranges, from the warmest water, 27 degrees Centigrade, to the coldest, zero degrees Centigrade and below. The temperature of the North Atlantic that night was at the very bottom of the survival scale: 28° Fahrenheit or -2.2°C. A grid entitled 'Expected Survival Time in Cold Water' provides a simple guide to the life expectancy of the *Titanic*'s passengers and crew once they entered the freezing water of the North Atlantic. Within fifteen minutes they would have lost consciousness. Ten minutes later they would be dead.

Survivors of cold water accidents have reported how their breath was driven from them on the first impact with the water. If your first gasp for air is under water, you are on a fast track to drowning. If you succeed in holding your breath for long enough, the deadly combination of lack of oxygen and sudden drop in temperature places a severe strain on the body: surface blood vessels constrict, heart rate increases, blood pressure rises and hyperventilation takes over. This can trigger an immediate 'cold shock response' – effectively a fatal heart attack. This is the best you can hope for. It's your lucky day.

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If you are still alive two minutes after falling into the water you enter the first of three stages of death by hypothermia. You lose all feeling in your arms and legs, your body temperature plummets and you start shivering so violently that your teeth chatter. Your pupils dilate. The worst thing you can do now is start swimming – you will shorten your survival time by up to 50 per cent as your body loses heat at a much faster rate when you move. All the *Titanic* victims were desperately trying to get as far away from the sinking ship as possible for fear of being sucked down with it, but they were unknowingly hastening their deaths. You may suddenly start to feel warmer. This is a cruel deception. Your body temperature is still dropping like a stone. When you are unable to touch your thumb with your little finger, you are about to enter stage two.

In stage two, movement becomes slower and confusion sets in. Surface blood vessels contract further as the body focuses its remaining resources on keeping the vital organs warm. Lips, ears, fingers and toes turn blue. Pulse rate drops further but heart rate increases. Breathing becomes erratic and shallow.

Stage three kicks in when the body temperature drops below 32°C (89.6°F). Shivering usually stops. At 30°C (86°F) you lose consciousness as cellular metabolic processes, essential for maintaining life, shut down. Major organs fail. Clinical death occurs at 26°C (79°F) but brain death follows later because of the decreased cellular activity. No one in the water would have been alive after 2.45 a.m.

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It is hard to imagine two more different lives than those of the American millionaire Colonel J. J. Astor and my grandfather Jock Hume, a music teacher's son from Dumfries. But fate would bind them together that night, not only by throwing them together in the final minutes of their lives, but with what the two men left behind. For both Astor's young wife Madeleine and Jock's fiancée Mary Costin were pregnant and, later that year, would give birth to children who would grow up never having known their fathers. The *Titanic* would cast a dark shadow over both families for a hundred years.

My mother had a clear childhood memory of a postcard of the *Titanic* propped up on the mantelpiece at her home in Buccleuch Street, Dumfries; it stayed there for many years. From time to time it would be taken down to be dusted, or to be shown to a visitor. Jock would have sent it from Southampton on the morning of Wednesday 10 April before the ship sailed.

Jock had found out only a week earlier that Mary was expecting his baby, although she had suspected for a week or more that she might be pregnant. Mary broke the news to him the night before he left to join the ship. They had been saving up to be married at Greyfriars Church, Dumfries in May, after the *Titanic* returned from its maiden voyage and she had been nervous about how Jock would take the news that she was expecting his child. It was a relief to find that he was as thrilled as she was.

Mary went with Jock early next morning, 9 April, to Dumfries railway station where he was to catch a

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Caledonian Railway train to Carlisle for a connection to Liverpool, the first leg of his journey to Southampton where he would join the *Titanic*. They had left home late and had to run the last thirty yards to the station as they heard the train approach, Jock boarding the train and slamming shut the door as the stationmaster blew his whistle. They kissed briefly through the open window then, as the locomotive built up steam and pulled slowly out of the station, they waved frantically behind a billowing curtain of smoke and steam. It would be the last time they saw each other.

In Liverpool, Jock headed straight for Lord Street where he was fitted for his bandsman's uniform by J. J. Rayner, the naval outfitters, who sewed on the brass White Star Line buttons and epaulettes. From there he walked the short distance to Castle Street to the offices of C. W. and F. N. Black, the musical agents who employed him and all the other members of the band. Here he collected a rail warrant for the last leg of the journey to Southampton to board the ship. Rayner's had an arrangement with the Black brothers and would send the bill for Jock's uniform to them. Then it was back to Lime Street station.

Jock caught an afternoon train to London arriving in time to take a late train from Waterloo to Southampton. It was 10 p.m. by the time he knocked on the door of number 140 St Mary's Road, Southampton, where he was welcomed by his landlady Mrs King. She kept rooms for five lodgers, most of them crew on passenger liners. Jock was one of her regulars and Mrs King was used to late arrivals. The following morning he boarded the *Titanic* early at Southampton's Berth 24, the dockside already swarming with people. The

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band were travelling on a Second Class ticket and Jock entered the ship aft on C Deck via the Second Class gangway. Two cabins on E Deck had been made available for the eight musicians.

Jock had never minded leaving Mary before – in truth, he had spent much of the past two years away from Dumfries, playing on passenger ships, and they had both come to terms with separations. But this time it was different. For the first time in his life, Jock's thoughts were on what he had left behind rather than what lay ahead. He normally waited until he reached his destination before writing a postcard or a letter to Mary but this time he sent a postcard of the *Titanic* with some reassuring, well-chosen words.

The Astors boarded the *Titanic* at Cherbourg, accompanied by Astor's valet Victor Robbins, Madeleine's maid Rosalie Bidois and her nurse Caroline Endres. Astor's much-loved Airedale dog Kitty, who had accompanied them to Egypt, was with them.

Astor could not have been looking forward to the reception that awaited him and his young bride Madeleine in New York. The couple, who had been on an extended honeymoon lasting several months, had been the focus of fascination and gossip since Astor's acrimonious divorce from his wife Ava the previous year, a divorce that had scandalised society and divided loyalties. Aged just eighteen, Madeleine Talmage Force was twenty-seven years her husband's junior and a year younger than his son Vincent. 'A rather tall, graceful girl with brown hair and strong clean-cut features', according to the *New York Times*,

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Madeleine had only just left finishing school when she had been inadvertently introduced to Astor by her parents, who thought him a suitably wealthy match for their older daughter, Katherine.

Astor had sensibly decided to put time and distance between himself and his critics while showing Madeleine the world. They had spent several weeks in Egypt and France and were now settled in one of the most luxurious state rooms on the ship. But the honeymoon was almost over; Madeleine was six months pregnant and when the *Titanic* docked in New York Astor would be facing the wrath of his family and the disapproval of his detractors as well as the scrutiny of investors.

Sunday 14 April was a beautiful starlit night, cold but pin-sharp clear, and it must have reminded Jock of the cold winter nights at home in Dumfries and Galloway. Survivors later recalled their separate encounters with Jock and with Astor, both of whom, before the end of the night, would demonstrate one other thing they had in common – courage. Violet Jessop, a stewardess on the ship, first ran into Jock during the band's interval during dinner, which was announced every evening at 6 p.m. with a blast on a horn by the ship's bugler. 'He was always so eager and full of life was Jock,' she said. 'He called out to me in his rich Scotch accent that he was about to give them a "real tune, a Scotch tune, to finish up with".'

Later that night, after the order to abandon ship had been given, she passed the band as they raced up the stairs carrying their instruments to resume playing on deck. Jock looked pale, she thought. 'We're just going to give them a tune to cheer things up a bit,' he told her.

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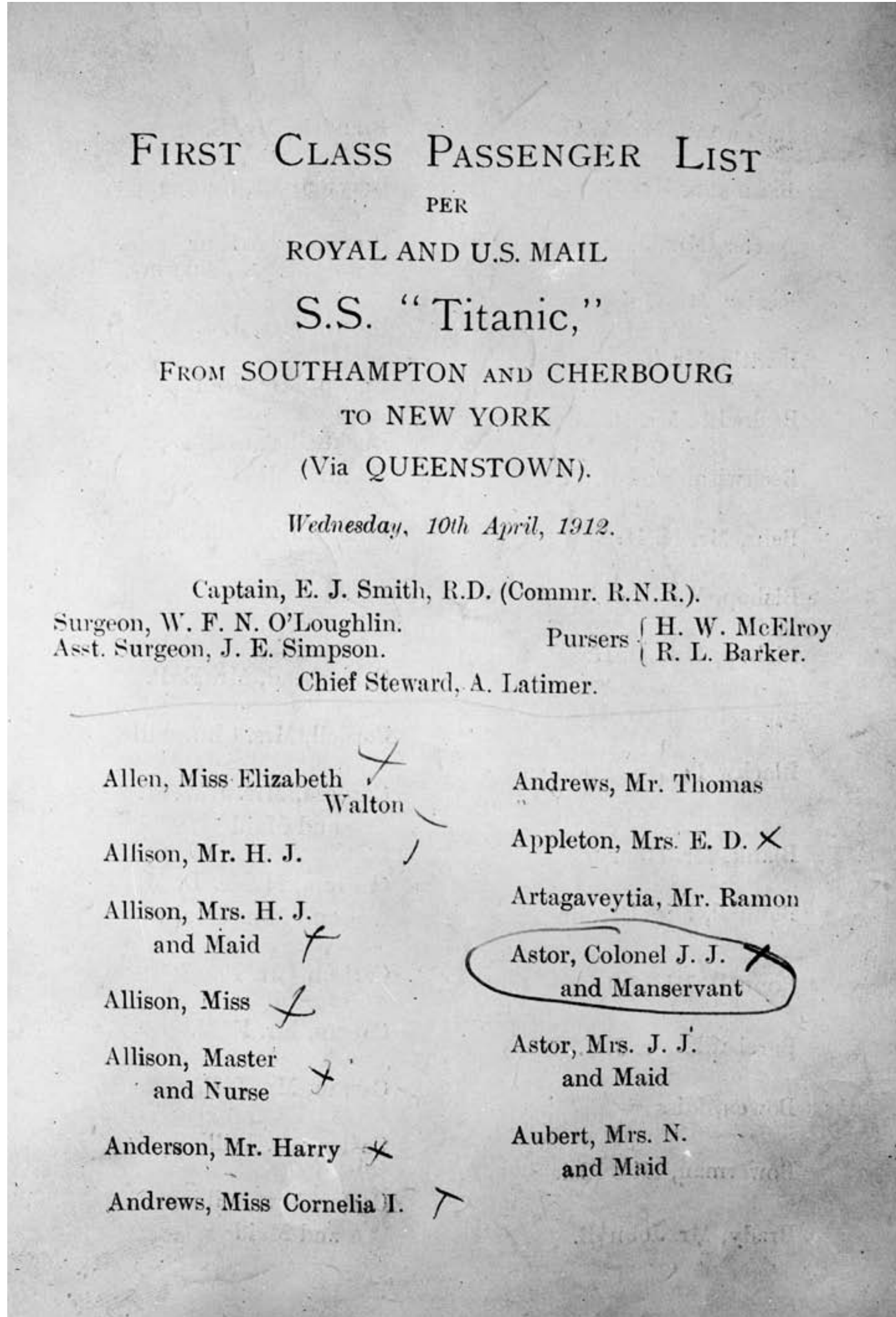

FIRST CLASS PASSENGER LIST
PER
ROYAL AND U.S. MAIL
S.S. "Titanic,"
FROM SOUTHAMPTON AND CHERBOURG
TO NEW YORK
(Via QUEENSTOWN).
Wednesday, 10th April, 1912.

Captain, E. J. Smith, R.D. (Commr. R.N.R.).
Surgeon, W. F. N. O'Loughlin.
Asst. Surgeon, J. E. Simpson.
Pursers { H. W. McElroy
R. L. Barker.
Chief Steward, A. Latimer.

Allen, Miss Elizabeth Walton
Allison, Mr. H. J.
Allison, Mrs. H. J. and Maid
Allison, Miss
Allison, Master and Nurse
Anderson, Mr. Harry
Andrews, Miss Cornelia I.
Andrews, Mr. Thomas
Appleton, Mrs. E. D.
Artagaveytia, Mr. Ramon
Astor, Colonel J. J. and Manservant
Astor, Mrs. J. J. and Maid
Aubert, Mrs. N. and Maid

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There were conflicting accounts of Astor's last moments, as there were disagreements about just about everything that happened that night. But several people independently saw him kiss Madeleine on both cheeks before helping her into lifeboat number 4, and then stand back and salute her. The best and probably most accurate account is that of Colonel Archibald Gracie, one of the last to leave the ship, who wrote a dramatic eyewitness account of the sinking before dying a year later as a result of his exposure in the sea. Colonel Gracie helped Astor lift Madeleine over the 4ft high rail into a lifeboat:

> Her husband held her left arm as we carefully passed her to Lightoller (Charles Lightoller, Second Officer) who seated her in the boat. A dialogue now ensued between Colonel Astor and the officer, every word of which I listened to with intense interest. Astor was close to me in the adjoining window frame, to the left of mine. Leaning out over the rail he asked permission of Lightoller to enter the boat to protect his wife which, in view of her delicate condition, seems to have been a reasonable request, but the officer, intent upon his duty, and obeying orders, and not knowing the millionaire from the rest of us replied: 'No, sir, no men are allowed in these boats until women are loaded first'. Col Astor did not demur, but bore the refusal bravely and resignedly, simply asking the number of the boat to help find his wife later, in case he also was rescued. 'Number 4' was Lightoller's reply. Nothing more was said.

It seems that one of Colonel Astor's last acts was to go below decks to retrieve his Airedale dog Kitty from the *Titanic*'s

kennels. Madeleine never spoke publicly about what happened that night except to say that as lifeboat number 4 pulled away from the sinking ship, the band was still playing and the last thing she saw was Kitty pacing the deck.

Of the 1,497 passengers and crew who died that night, more than 1,000 were never seen again, their bodies disappearing for ever, their families, loved ones and friends left in an eternal state of not knowing, with no body to grieve over.

Yet the bodies of three out of the eight bandsmen *were* recovered and – even more remarkably – were found together. For the next eight days and nights, kept upright and buoyant by their cork lifejackets, Hartley's violin case still strapped firmly to his chest, they were carried forty miles from the *Titanic*'s last resting place by winds and currents.

We will never know how, in the last minutes of their lives, numb with cold, they managed to achieve this, or how or when the other five slipped away from the rest of the band. But on 23 April the three dead bandsmen had a rendezvous with a ship as remarkable in its own way as the *Titanic*: the cable ship *Mackay-Bennett*. One of the three was my grandfather, Jock.

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