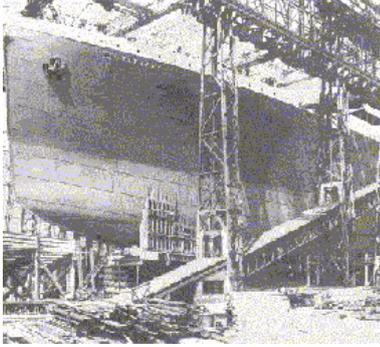




The Connection Between H.M.S. *Conway* and RMS *Titanic*

In 1912 H.M.S. *Conway* was Britain's premier training school ship preparing young men for a life at sea as officers in the Royal and Merchant Navys. When ships met at sea or in port there was every likelihood that one or more of her officers would be Old Conways. RMS *Titanic* was no exception.



Titanic's first captain was Old Conway Captain Herbert J Haddock, CB, RD, RNR (Conway 1875-77). He commanded her throughout her build in Belfast and her delivery to the White Star Line. He expected to command her maiden voyage but at the last minute the White Star Line decided to appoint one of their more senior master mariners, Captain E J Smith, to be her master. Smith took command on 1st April just in time for *Titanic's* final sea trials and Haddock replaced him in her sister ship *Olympic*. *Olympic* set off across the Atlantic shortly after *Titanic* and was just 100 miles behind her when she sank. Captain Haddock received *Titanic's* radio distress signal but

could get to her in time. He testified to the American inquiry and later also attended the British Board of Trade inquiry.

Old Conway James Moody (Conway 1904 to 06) was *Titanic's* Sixth Officer. At 24 years of age he was the most junior and youngest officer. He was on watch on the bridge when *Titanic* struck the iceberg. He answered the phone from the lookout and uttered the fatal words to the First Officer: "*Iceberg right ahead*". During the evacuation, he helped fill lifeboats 12, 14, and 16. He was last seen about 2:18 a.m. by Second Officer Charles Lightoller trying to launch the collapsible boats. His last actions were poignantly recalled by Geoffrey Marcus in *The Maiden Voyage*.

"... efforts to avert panic, maintain order and discipline, and get the last of the boats loaded and lowered to the water were valiantly supported by the youngest of the officers, James Moody. Long before this, the latter should by rights have gone away in one of the boats along with the other junior officers. But the seamen left on board were all too few as it was for the work that had to be done. Moody therefore stayed with the ship to the end and was the means of saving many a life that would otherwise have been lost."



The other Old Conway associated with *Titanic* was Sir Arthur Henry Rostron CBE KBE RD RNR (Conway 1885-6). He was the Master of RMS *Carpathia* and approximately 93 miles from *Titanic* when her distress signal was received. He sped to her rescue and although she had sunk by the time he arrived he managed to pick up nearly 700 survivors on the morning of April 15th. He telegraphed Old *Conway* Captain Haddock now very close in *Olympic* advising him that all survivors had been rescued. As the result of his efforts to reach the *Titanic* before she

sank, and his preparations for and conduct of the rescue of the survivors, Captain Rostron was lionised as a hero. He testified about the events the night *Titanic* sank at both the U.S. Senate inquiry and the British Board of Trade's inquiry into the disaster. *Titanic* survivors, including Margaret Brown, presented Rostron with a silver cup and gold medal for his efforts the night the ship sank. He went on to become Master of *Mauretania* and holder of the Blue Ribband for the west-east Atlantic crossing. After World War I was appointed Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire. He was made the commodore of the Cunard fleet before retiring in 1931.

There are many stories of nearby vessels that did not come to *Titanic's* aid. Old *Conway* Ernest "Ernie" Lee (Conway 1906-8 and so a contemporary of Moody's) was an officer in the Elder Dempster Line's SS *Benin* en route from St Johns Newfoundland to Cape Town. They were very close to *Titanic's* position but having no radio did not receive her distress signals and were too far away to see her rockets. He only learned of the tragedy on arriving at Cape Town. When he checked *Benin's* charts he found they had been "not very far away from *Titanic*".



J Bruce Ismay, Chairman and Managing Director of the White Star Line was a long standing member of *Conway's* Management Committee as White Star Line had been one of *Conway's* original sponsors and continued regularly to employ her cadets. He sailed on *Titanic's* maiden voyage and, controversially, survived the disaster having stepped into one of the lifeboats. However it seems that Ismay helped with loading and lowering several lifeboats and according to his testimony, only entered a half-filled lifeboat when that boat was actually being lowered and no other women or children were in the vicinity.

Finally, a strange quirk of fate. The grandson of *Titanic's* Captain E J Smith – William Russell-Smith was a *Conway* cadet from 1951-53. William was also lost at sea on 10th April 1956, 44 years after his grandfather, almost to the day. He was serving as Third Officer in the RFA *Wave Commander* in the English Channel when he was lost overboard in very heavy weather. The accompanying vessels mounted a comprehensive search for his body but it was never found. At least 117 Old *Conways* were lost at sea and have no known grave.

How The Loss Was Reported in the Ship's Magazine The Cadet

The *Cadet* 19th April 1912: "As we go to press the news of the awful disaster to the *Titanic* is just to hand. The reports so far are more or less contradictory, but there is no doubt of the great loss of life, unparalleled in the history of the British Merchant Service. There is so far no mention of the Officers and we therefore cannot say yet whether any Old *Conway* boys were amongst them or not, though it is known that at least one expected to be appointed to her. Captain Haddock, of the *Olympic*, and Captain Rostron of the *Carpathia* are both Old Boys. The sympathy of all on board the ship, and of those connected with her, is with the bereaved, especially those who were saved and left husbands and fathers on board the ill-fated vessel to go down with her."

The Cadet June 1912: The June issue announced: "*A collection in aid of the Titanic Fund made on board on the first day of term realized £26, which amount was sent to Lord Derby, The Lord Mayor of Liverpool*". It also carried a very short Obituary:

J. P. Moody (1892-3). 6th Officer of the Titanic. Went down with his ship.

A letter from H Laidlaw (at The Royal Mail Officers' Club, Southampton) mentioned that "*I met Moody about a month ago, in Southampton. He was then 5th Officer of the Oceanic and had just been appointed to the Titanic and was quite pleased that he was going to her.*"

The Cadet 3rd August 1912: The editorial stressed "*That every cadet should have a more or less good idea of sailing a boat before he leaves the Ship ... It is at least conceivable that complete familiarity with boat work in the case of the men in charge of the various boats of the Titanic might have brought back some of the partly loaded boats alongside ... before she sank, and thus saved more lives.*"

In Memoriam

Moody's family presented the Ship with The Moody Cup, as a prize for an annual sailing race between cadets. It is now held by the Merseyside Maritime Museum but loaned to the *Conway* Club as the table centrepiece for the annual dinner dance and it is competed for annually by members of the *Conway* Cruising Club.

Some years ago The Friends of H.M.S. Conway <http://www.hmsconway.org/friends.html> were instrumental in restoring the family's long forgotten memorial to James Moody in Woodland cemetery, Scarborough. The headstone refers to his role in the Titanic disaster, and commemorates Moody's sacrifice with the words 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' They also presented a commemorative brass plaque which is hung in Scarborough lifeboat house.