

THE WORLD AROUND US — HISTORY · P4–P7

RMS Titanic — Déanta i mBéal Feirste

Built in Belfast — P4–P7

Key facts

1

Harland & Wolff

The Belfast shipyard that built the Titanic. Founded in 1861. At its peak, the largest shipyard in the world. The giant H&W cranes (Samson and Goliath) still dominate east Belfast's skyline.

2

White Star Line

The shipping company that commissioned the Titanic (and her sister ships Olympic and Britannic). Owner: J.P. Morgan's International Mercantile Marine. The Belfast connection: White Star Line's managing director was J. Bruce Ismay.

3

Construction

Titanic's keel was laid on 31 March 1909. 3,000 workers employed on construction. Launched (hull only — no fittings) on 31 May 1911. Fitted out over the next 10 months in the fitting-out basin.

4

The workforce

Shipyard workers — riveters, platers, caulkers, joiners — mostly from east Belfast and across Ulster. They worked 49 hours a week in dangerous conditions. Approximately 8 workers died during construction.

5

The voyage and sinking

Titanic left Southampton 10 April 1912. Struck an iceberg at 11:40pm on 14 April 1912. Sank at 2:20am on 15 April. 1,517 of 2,224 passengers and crew died — one of the deadliest peacetime maritime disasters.



6

Titanic Belfast

The world's largest Titanic visitor experience, opened 2012 on the site of the original shipyard. Visited by 6 million+ people. One of Northern Ireland's most important tourist assets.

c and Belfast identity

Pride, grief, and a complicated

- PRIDE: the Titanic was built by Belfast workers — a monument to their skill. The city is rightly proud of its shipbuilding heritage.
- THE JOKE: for decades Belfast humour handled the Titanic with the line 'She was alright when she left here.' The city's relationship with the disaster is complex.
- HARLAND & WOLFF TODAY: still operating (in reduced form) in east Belfast — now focused on offshore wind and sustainable energy rather than passenger ships.
- SOCIAL HISTORY: the workers who built the Titanic were from working-class Belfast — both traditions. The shipyard was a major employer for the Protestant east Belfast community particularly.
- THE VICTIMS: 22 crew members from Belfast. The grave of Thomas Andrews (ship designer, born in Comber, Co. Down) is at Comber. Andrews went down with the ship.
- FILM: James Cameron's 1997 film made the story globally known again. The wreck sits 3,784m below the Atlantic — 590km south of Newfoundland.

