

Titanic Anniversary



WEDNESDAY, 11 APRIL 2012

Titanic family tells film-makers to 'get their facts right'

THE GRANDSON of the Titanic's second in command has warned the makers of a new four-part Titanic TV series to make sure they get their facts right regarding the ship's final moments.



Chris Bayliss' grandfather Henry Wilde was the ship's chief officer and will feature in all episodes of a four part series set to be broadcast on ITV to coincide with the 100th year since the disaster.

The Sefton resident shared his substantial collection of memorabilia with the Champion including previously unpublished personal letters sent from the Titanic when it docked in Belfast.

While revealing his personal treasures, he told of his disappointment with the 1997 Titanic blockbuster's coverage of what he says is 'speculative' evidence from the ship's final minutes.

Chris believes there is conflicting evidence to prove First Officer Murdoch shot dead a passenger before killing himself and says that it could have been his own grandfather instead.

ITV are set to show four episodes of Titanic in April with Oscar winning writer Julian Fellowes believing the show will "set out to tell the story of the whole ship."

Chief officer Henry Wilde was off-duty at the time of the sinking and will be played by actor Will Keen.



The Champion can reveal his back story is not for the faint hearted.

Two years before the disaster his wife Mary died in childbirth along with newborn twins Archie and Richard so the seaman was left to bring up four children, including Chris' mother Annie, on his own in Maghull.

In April 1912 Henry was originally set for a senior position on the sister ship The Olympic but in a twist of fate letters reveal how in a last-minute reshuffle against his wishes, he was signed up to the Titanic.

Grandson Chris said: "As you can imagine my grandfather took a large part of 1911 off to sort out family matters.

"Because of his job he left four orphans and kept in touch with them via writing letters.

"He was due to sail on the Olympic but captain Smith wanted a more experienced chief officer for the Titanic so he requested that my grandfather took the position up.

"He only found out the day before it sailed and then he was introduced to the rest of the crew.

"There is a letter that states, he wrote to say that he didn't want to go on the Titanic and there could have been various reasons for that including the ill-feeling about the last minute command reshuffle."

When the Titanic docked in Belfast in Henry's final letter to his family he mentions how the ship is an "improvement" on his previous ship the Olympic.



Three days before the sinking, on 11 April, he wrote: "I only got word from Liverpool at 2.30pm on Tuesday to say I was to go here.

"I had a very busy time in Southampton on board all day Good Friday and Sunday getting this ship ready and not knowing whether I was going on the ship or not.

"I have not time to give you any details about the ship but she is an improvement on the Olympic in many ways.

"I hope you will be able to come here yourself. I would like you and Jane to come down I am longing to see the little ones so much and hope to do so next trip home.

"I will be back in 16 days from now and will try to get home on Saturday for the weekend."

Chris added: "To be honest with you when I was a little boy, you didn't ask questions you just sat there, you were always taught to be seen and not heard."



"My mother only having been three and a half didn't know a lot about what had gone on and my auntie Jane generally speaking wouldn't speak about it.

"There's that much stuff that comes up about what happened a lot of the evidence contradicts each other.

"There is no reliable account of my grandfather's final days so I'm looking forward as to seeing how accurate this TV programme is.

"I think it is important for the directors to leave the controversial bits out rather than speculating as I honestly don't believe that we will ever find out the true story of what happened the night it sunk."

Posted by Rave at 08:06

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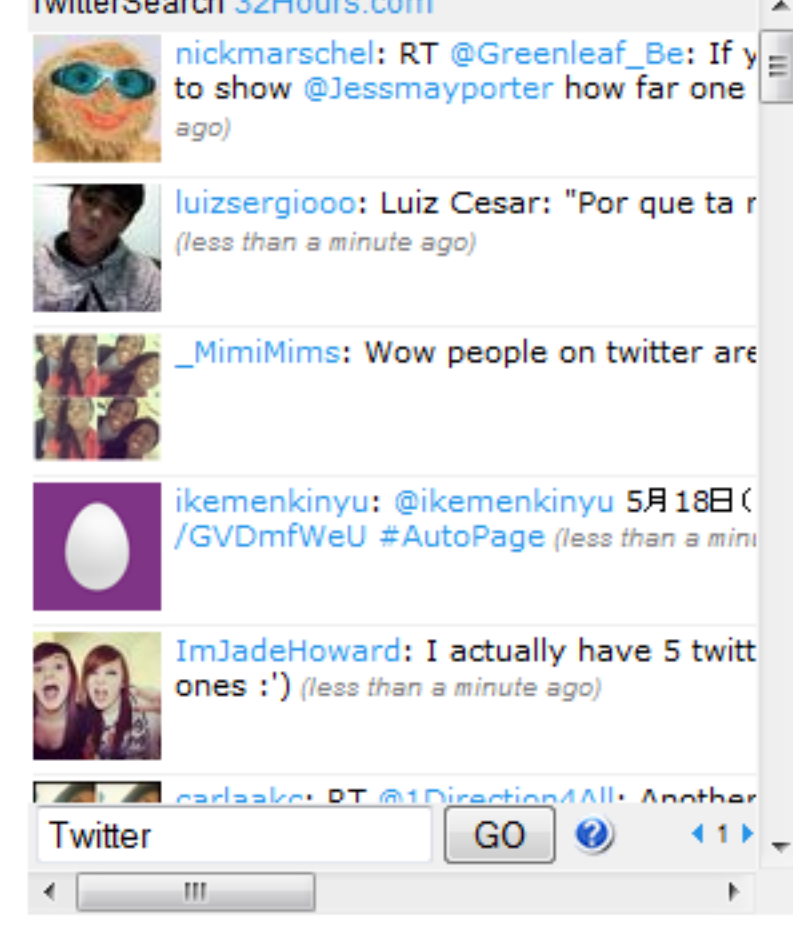
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