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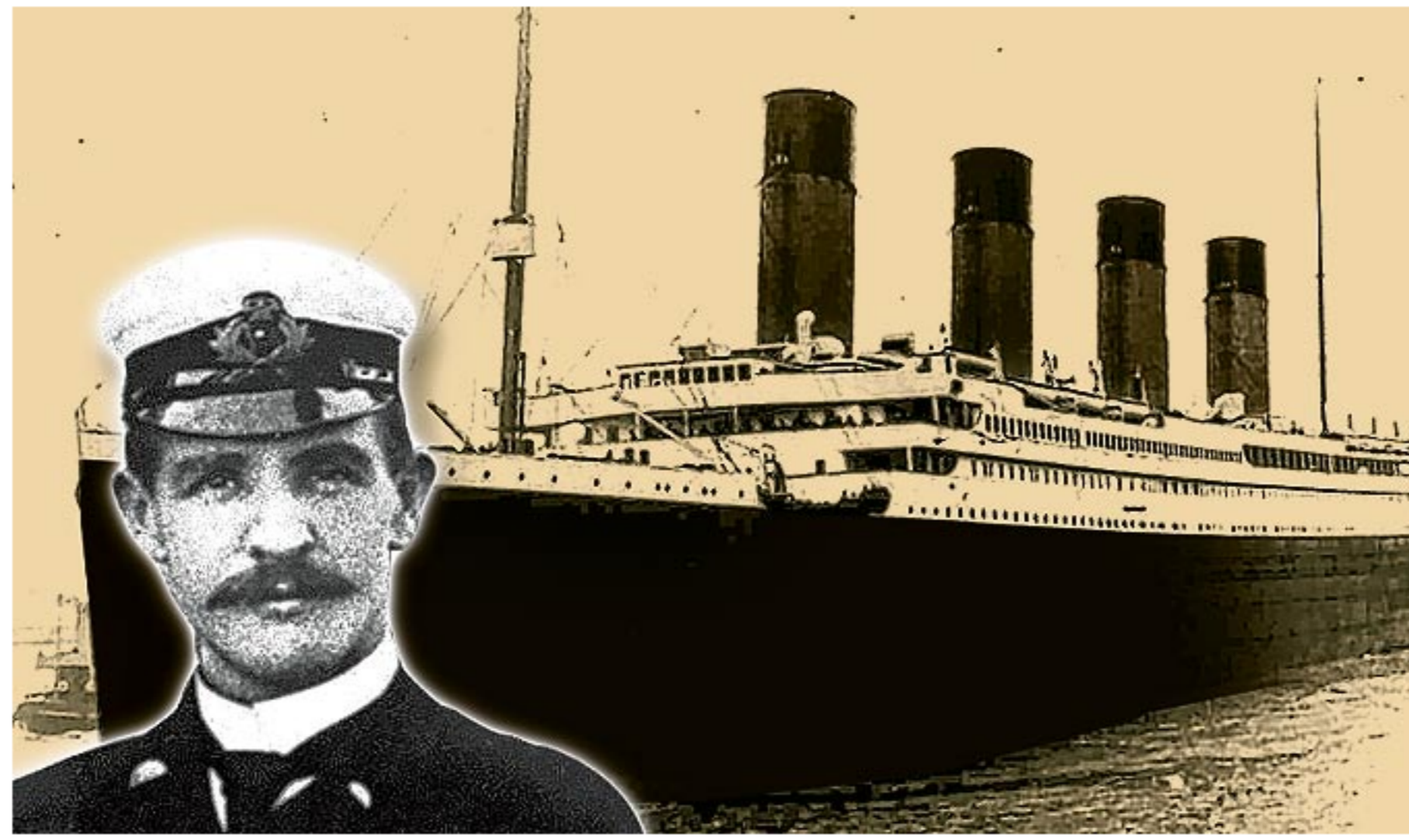
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Features

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It was a Scot wot sunk it



That sinking feeling ... ship may have missed iceberg if Murdoch had reacted sooner

By MATT BENDORIS

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THE Titanic's Scottish First Officer was to blame for sinking the doomed ship, a new report has revealed.

Lieutenant William Murdoch, of Dalbeattie, Kirkcudbrightshire, had been in charge of the bridge when the ocean liner struck an iceberg and sank with the loss of 1,500 lives in 1912.

For the past 99 years he has been hailed as a hero for his brave attempts to save the ship on its maiden voyage from Southampton to New York.

The original inquiry into the sinking found Murdoch had immediately tried to steer away from the iceberg.

That dramatic scene was recreated in the 1997 blockbuster Titanic — starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet — with Murdoch played by Scots actor Ewan Stewart.

But now it's been claimed that Murdoch delayed changing course for a full 30 seconds, which led to 46,000-ton vessel — branded 'unsinkable' — being sunk.

Researchers believe the reason Murdoch hesitated before giving the order "harda-starboard" — hard to starboard — was he thought the Titanic might be able to pass by unharmed.

The finding comes from a study for the centenary of the disaster next year, where experts reinvestigated the official 1912 inquiry using new evidence.

And their conclusion overturns the original verdict.

American Titanic expert Samuel Halpern, who led the study, said: "If the first officer had reacted maybe even 15 seconds sooner, the ship would have missed."

According to the 1912 findings, the iceberg was sighted about 1,500ft ahead of the ship and the collision followed 37 seconds later. However, the latest research establishes that the iceberg was spotted when 2,000ft away, almost a minute before impact, and the ship held its course for around half of that time.

The researchers based this on the testimony of the lookout Frederick Fleet and Robert Hichens, the sailor at the wheel.

A third sailor, Alfred Olliver, claimed he left his post when he heard the bells and reached the bridge just as it struck the iceberg — which would have taken more than 50 seconds.

Halpern, of Chicago University, adds: "I believe the delay was so Murdoch could see if the ship was going to miss the iceberg without the need for turning.

"It was a judgment call, and he misjudged. But I don't think we can blame him."

Researchers found that Murdoch had been involved in a similar incident in 1903 on another ship, the Arabic.

On that occasion it had worked, when he narrowly missed another vessel after he correctly decided to maintain course, rather than turn away.

After the Titanic collision, Murdoch is credited with helping to launch 10 lifeboats, saving hundreds of passengers. He was last seen attempting to launch an 11th raft, before going down with the ship, dying aged 39.

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stuff and nonsense :(And any undeniable proof...

He was really a gifted sailor. It was not his fault that he was on the bridge at that time and was oblige to take a decision

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