

HMHS *BRITANNIC*'S OFFICERS' APPOINTMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Although a great deal of new information has surfaced in recent years about the *Britannic*'s crew, due to the inevitable time lag between material being uncovered and then published none of the books currently available about the *Britannic* contains an entirely accurate list of the officers appointed to the ship during her brief career. *Britannic* was not in service for a long time and it is easier to present a complete listing for the ship's brief life.

Since my short article about Second Officer Alfred Brocklebank explains in some detail why I believe he was the only man to serve in that position, I don't see the need to go into further details here. However, there is a lot of new information in this listing – including the actual dates that First Officer George Oliver and Sixth Officer Welsh were appointed to the *Britannic*. While Simon Mills' *Hostage to Fortune* (2002) recorded for the first time that these two men were onboard the ship by the time of her final voyage, at that time it was unknown exactly when they had joined the ship (since the ship's log did not record the dates). As my

Mark Chirnside's Reception Room

listing (and research) makes clear, Oliver was actually onboard for the ship's final three voyages, yet Welsh only joined the ship for her final voyage. First Officer Hugh Hollingsworth did not actually make a voyage on the *Britannic*, since he served on the ship for less than a month while she was waiting off Cowes (joining the *Adriatic* on September 22nd 1916), but it had previously been thought that he had served right up until the ship's sinking. (Hollingsworth was on the *Justicia* when she sank in July 1918.)

There is more information waiting to be uncovered, but although this listing aims to provide an accurate set of data about the times that various officers were serving onboard *Britannic*, there is no intention to provide a detailed analysis of each officer's career history. While several of the officers' complete careers are known, research is still ongoing, and it is to be hoped that this information can be compiled at a future time – perhaps as a series of research articles.

CAPTAIN

- Charles Alfred Bartlett (December 14th 1915; September 4th 1916)

ASSISTANT COMMANDER

- Harry William Dyke (December 20th 1915; September 4th 1916)

CHIEF OFFICER

- Robert Hume (December 20th 1915; September 4th 1916)

FIRST OFFICER

- James Henry Callow (December 20th 1915)
- Hugh John Hollingsworth (September 4th 1916)
- George Ernest Kemp Oliver (September 22nd 1916)

SECOND OFFICER

- Alfred Brocklebank (December 20th 1915; September 4th 1916)

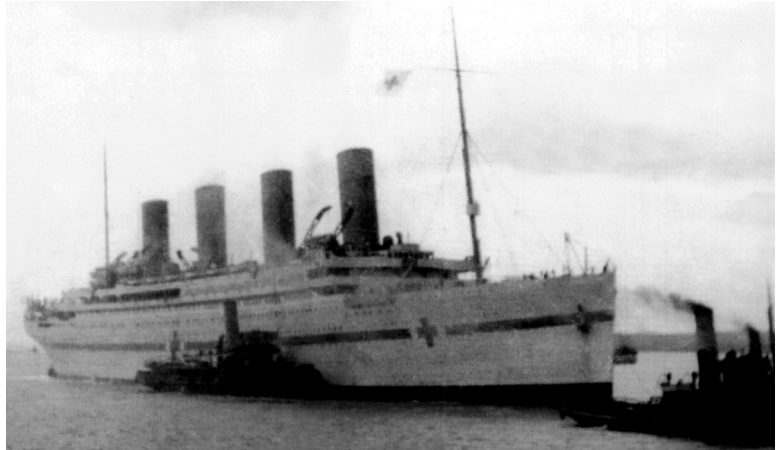
THIRD OFFICER

- J. H. Walker (December 1915)
- George Newlove (May 1916)
- Francis W. Laws (September 1916)*

* *Britannic's* final Third Officer has been recorded as 'D. W. Laws' for a long time (the crew list for September to November 1916 appears to record a 'J. W.' or 'D. W.' Laws), yet there is little trace of the name. In fact, the crew list for November 1916 held in Newfoundland records the name more clearly as 'F. W. Laws' (Francis William Laws) – whose documentation shows that his certificate number and details match those of *Britannic's* Third Officer.

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Right: Britannic enters Southampton water, escorted by a veritable flotilla of tugs, on 9 January 1916. (J. Kent Layton Collection.)



FOURTH OFFICER

- J. J. Harris (December 1915)
- Duncan Campbell McTavish (September 1916)

FIFTH OFFICER

- W. Walker (December 1915)
- Gordon Bell Fielding (September 6th 1916)

SIXTH OFFICER

- Duncan Campbell McTavish (December 1915)
- John Chapman (September 1916)
- Herbert R. Welsh[†] (November 10th 1916)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Hilary Thomas for her considerable assistance with my research, while Michail Michailakis' site contains a growing crew list and researchers such as Remco Hillen have really done some sterling detective work in uncovering new information. Remco's article in the *Titanic Post* for the Swiss *Titanic Society* provides a good summary relating to the men who served on the *Britannic's* final voyage (look for issue 55, from March 2006).

[†] Welsh's name has previously been recorded as 'Welch,' apparently an incorrect spelling.