

## **THOMAS ANDREWS' OLYMPIC MAIDEN VOYAGE NOTES JUNE 1911**

By Mark Chirnside

**This article represents an expanded version of material published by Mark Chirnside's Reception Room in July 2005. It is published with revisions (up to July 2025).**

There were reportedly three sets of copies of Andrews' notes taken on *Olympic's* maiden voyage – a copy for the White Star Line, a copy for Harland & Wolff, and his personal copy. Some of the notes he took have been summarised before (see: Lepien, Ray. 'Olympic The Maiden Voyage'. *Titanic Commutator* 2003; Volume 27 Number 162; and: Marre, Jean-Philippe. *Thomas Andrews: Architecte du Titanic*. Lulu; 2015.) I was fortunate to purchase some of Andrews' notes in summer 2004. I then published extracts online in July 2005 and again as an appendix in the revised and expanded edition of *The 'Olympic' Class Ships: Olympic, Titanic & Britannic* (History Press; May 2011), however many of Andrews' recommendations were missing. At that time, I did not realise quite how many were unavailable but, over the years, a number of researchers have kindly shared material and helped to fill in the gaps.

We know that the set is still not complete because Andrews numbered his notes consecutively, from 1 to 56. Work is ongoing to try and reassemble the entirety of what he wrote, however notes 28 to 39 and 47 to 55 inclusive are still missing (as of July 2025). This revised article adds to the notes published previously.

I am grateful to researchers including Scott Andrews, Bruce Beveridge, Robin Beuting, Gunter Babler, Mark Evans, Joao Goncalves, Ray Lepien and Bill Sauder, for sharing information and supporting with my interpretation of either the handwriting or a particular detail. Any errors are mine alone.

The purpose of Andrews' notes was to serve as a record capturing specific items of interest. These included operational details, such as how the gangways were operated at Southampton and how the ship was docked, to proposals concerning improvements to the ship's passenger accommodation or crew facilities which could either be carried out on *Olympic* or incorporated into the design of her sister ships. All of these notes were intended for discussion by Harland & Wolff and White Star Line.

In the extracts below, the original spelling and grammar have been retained as far as possible. There are some unreadable words. Verbatim quotes of what Andrews wrote are in *italics*. Some of the notes have been paraphrased: this is specifically noted against each one and they are formatted normally. My notes are also provided in **bold**.

*R.M.S. 'Olympic'*  
*Notes taken on 1<sup>st</sup> Voyage from Southampton  
to New York*

1. Andrews commented on the '*overhead passenger gangways on the quay at Southampton*' and recommended some changes in the event of bad weather. [original quote and paraphrasing]

2. Andrews thought that the first class gangway at Southampton should have landed '*the passengers with the 1<sup>st</sup> class entrance on "D" deck instead of on "B" deck thus providing a level gangway and less demanding[?] for passengers. The position of these gangways will always vary due to condition of tide as shown on [unreadable]*'. [original quote and paraphrasing]

3. *The vessel should always be berthed in Southampton with the port side towards the quay thus providing direct communication through special (^shipside) engine door. thus eliminating passing all material etc. through the present 2nd class entrance on "E" deck.*

4. *When docking & undocking 3rd class passengers should not be allowed on the poop or forecastle decks, as in the event of a rope carrying away someone would be sure to be killed.*

5. *In Liverpool when docking or undocking stern first, the Pilot is always on the Docking Bridge aft, think this practice should be carried out in Southampton .*

6. *Would suggest propeller notice boards being permanently fitted on outside of ship's side rails in way of after Docking bridge, as is the practice in other Company's Steamers. Thus saving the placing & stowing away of these boards every voyage with corresponding destruction to the painting and printing.*

7. *Propose ACQUIRING SOME additional Accomd. In officers' acc. [accommodation, or officers' quarters] As per plan for [unreadable]. And [unreadable]. Converting their present Accomd. into staterooms.*

8. *Propose dispersing with 1st class stateroom C 144-146 placing the Chief Steward in this position & enlarging the Asst. Doctor's room.*

9. *The hat and cloak room on C deck 1st class entrance is not sufficiently used to warrant this loss of earning power space, would suggest substituting SAME to berth as staterooms with athwartship passage, as per plans fitting hooks for hats & cloaks across the bulkhead facing elevators on D deck.*

10. *Would propose fitting eleven additional four seated tables in 1st class restaurant as per plan, this room being short of table accommodation.*

**The *a la carte* restaurant proved to be very popular on *Olympic* and it was extended in the 1912-13 refit. *Titanic's* was enlarged during construction and *Britannic's* was designed to be the largest on the three sister ships.**

11. *A screen to be an improvement if fitted on the side of the restaurant/buffet SUPT entrance door so as to prevent passengers from seeing behind the buffet.*

12. *The two single serving doors P & S [port and starboard] from the pantry to the 1st class saloon do not appear to be necessary for service and are better kept shut owing to noise. The space in way of these doors will provide accommodation for one additional four seated table P & S in the saloon.*

***Olympic's* first class dining saloon capacity had been increased from 532 to 540 seats by August 1911 (the first of many alterations where the seating capacity was adjusted upwards or downwards throughout her career).**

*13. The 1st class Reception Room being the most popular room in the 1st class passenger accommodation being more or less crowded after lunch & dinner also for afternoon tea 4.30 p.m. It was found necessary to bring up all the spare caine [sic] chairs from the baggage room to provide temporary seating accommodation, would strongly recommend additional permanent caine [sic] furniture being ordered. As smoking is allowed at all times in the Reception Room an exhaust fan drawing from the fore and after girder P & S as in the saloon.*

**Andrews' observations about the popularity of the reception room were echoed by Cunard's naval architect, Leonard Peskett later in 1911. Harland & Wolff made plans to increase the size of the reception room on *Olympic*, taking the opportunity to enlarge it by reducing the size of the first class gangway entrance halls. This change was apparently implemented in October and November 1911, when she was being repaired after the *Hawke* collision. The same configuration was also adapted for *Titanic* and *Britannic*. (It was only very late in *Olympic's* career when the reception room was reduced slightly by expanding the first class dining saloon. This happened during her 1928-29 refit and followed on from a dance floor being fitted in the first class dining saloon, which reduced the seating capacity.)**

*14. Captain Smith strongly recommends protective windows with round bulls eye lights to be fitted in way of square windows on centre shelter navigating bridge as in Adriatic.*

*15. To prevent the excessive draught in the steward's stairway leading from 1st class pantry to working passage on E deck which is also used by the stewardess on E deck, suggest a fore & aft wood bulkhead with sliding doors be fitted at foot of stairs as shown on plan.*

*16. The numbering of the promenade dk. chairs to be altered in accordance with the terms on lithographic plans. H&W to enquire if any change was made on the numbering of the approved plan to which they were supposed to work.*

17. *Linoleum tiles not to be fitted in Captain's sitting room in which a full room carpet has been provided.*

18. *Sponge holders to be fitted in the private bathrooms on B and C decks where these have been omitted.*

19. *The mirrors in the wardrobe doors adjoining the entrance doors into inside staterooms on C deck to be dispensed with as when the entrance doors are left open on the deck anyone in the passage can see the occupant of the room dressing or undressing.*

20. *Back plates for electric reading lamps to be fitted over beds etc. in Suite Staterooms on B and C decks same as ordinary staterooms.*

21. *Hat & Coat hooks to be fitted in vestibule[?] adjoining suite rooms where these have been omitted.*

22. *Slip[?] bolts should be fitted on the inside of the 3rd class stateroom doors to give protection to such rooms occupied by women.*

23. *Cigarette holders have been omitted[?] to be fitted in 1st & 2nd class gentlemens WCs.*

24. *The positions of the doors with 1st class staterooms B.32 – 33 to be altered so that they do not look [directly?] with the forward main entrance.*

**First class accommodation plans issued in January 1912 showed that B36 on the port side and B37 on the starboard side had both been extended further into the entrance hall. However this configuration did not appear on other plans subsequently.**

25. *The printers room to be enlarged by dispensing with the [two?] sleeping berths, berths being provided with stewards accommodation.*

26. *An additional trough to be fitted in the 3rd class baker shop in position of dresser to be dispensed with.*

27. *A drop table to be fitted in fore & aft passage outside 3rd class galley sufficiently high to enable barrels of flour to be stored underneath.*

Notes 28 to 39 inclusive are missing.

40. *As the pantry adjoining the turkish baths is not used (as in the Adriatic) would suggest converting this room into a room for the female turkish bath attendants the present female attendants room being given over to the Restaurant Lady Clerks.*

41. *Dark rooms not used which I understand is the case in the Companys other vessels in which it is fitted, would suggest a photographer being carried and would sell photographs to passengers also develops films, printing etc.*

42. *An electric bell to be fitted from the outside of the Turkish bath cooling room door as this door has to be kept locked during hours the bath is being used by ladies.*

43. *A potato peeler could [with?] advantage in the crews galley forward which would serve to lessen the work and at the same time tend toward [economy?].*

44. *Notices denoting the lettering of the various decks to be fitted in the 2nd class accommodation.*

45. *A lock to fit the master key to be fitted on the door leading from the 1st class entrance on "E" deck into working passage, also from 2nd class entrances into working passage, to facilitate inspection.*

Notes 46 to 55 inclusive are missing.

56. *During the voyage no excessive vibration was experienced but a considerable vertical pulsation motion at certain speeds of the main engines which was particularly bad when both engines were running.*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I wish to repeat my thanks to researchers including Scott Andrews, Bruce Beveridge, Robin Beuting, Gunter Babler, Mark Evans, Joao Goncalves, Ray Lepien and Bill Sauder.