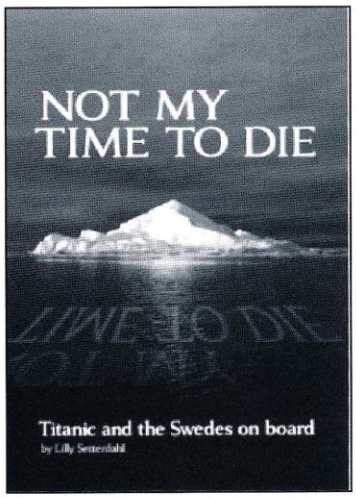
Book Looks

Not My Time to Die: Titanic and the Swedes on Board by Lilly Setterdahl. Published by Nordstjernan Förlag Swedish News, Inc. P.O. Box 1710, New Canaan, CT 06840. © 2012. Paperback, 285 pp. + end matter. Approx. 90 black-and-white photographs. ISBN 978-0-9672-1768-0. Available from amazon.com ($19.95) and amazon.co.uk (£11.95) plus shipping.

Among the many nationalities on board *Titanic,* Swedes were among the most numerous, with 123 on board, ranking fourth after the British, Americans and Irish. Their stories, and those of other Scandinavians on the passenger list, were recounted in TIS member Claes-Göran Wetterholm's *Titanic* (1988, with two later editions), but sadly, this work was never published in English.

TIS member Lilly Setterdahl addresses this omission with a new, comprehensive volume, *Not My Time to Die: Titanic and the Swedes on Board.* She begins by providing readers with a useful chapter on life in Sweden in the 20th Century's early years, explaining why so many Swedes were emigrating to America. A summary chapter on *Titanic* follows. The book's heart is some 20 first-hand accounts by Swedish survivors, together with the author's biographies of all Swedes on board, ranging from a paragraph or two to multiple pages in length, all based upon American and Swedish-language newspapers and archival sources on both sides of the Atlantic. Many are accompanied by thumbnail portraits. Some 565 footnotes indicate the extent of the book's sources. Particularly in the case of the third-class Swedes, the information is not found elsewhere (especially in English) and the stories are interesting, detailed and poignant, and told objectively without embellishment. By its very nature of focusing on individual passengers' stories, one reads this book in relatively short bits, rather than cover-to-cover in one sitting.



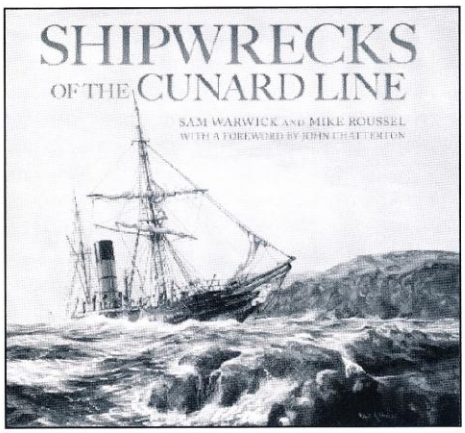
Several errors unfortunately did creep into the introductory chapters: *Lusitania* was sunk on May 7, 1915, not April 7 as the book has it. *Britannic* was launched on February 26, 1914, not January 16. An *Olympic* lifeboat (not *Titanic's*) was filled with weights to test the davits while in Belfast (not Southampton). We read, "The White Star Line was found responsible for the shipwreck in a New York Court on April 21, 1912." (The U.S. Senate's inquiry *began* on April 19; its report and court cases came much later.) *Titanic* was discovered on September 1, 1985, not July 14, 1986, and was not made "while scanning the area in a tiny sub named *Alvin*," but by using a remotely-operated, unmanned vehicle, *ARGO.* A statement "Later research based on the *Titanic's* wreck site suggests that the *Californian* and the *Titanic* could have been 4 to 20 miles apart" is hardly convincing. The bibliography page's heading is misspelled. The book is set in a san-serif typeface like this, with lengthy paragraphs in italics, both of which can become tiring to read.

The essence of *Titanic's* continuing longevity lies in learning new things about the ship and her people. *Not My Time to Die* offers a significant collection of previously unknown personal stories about one of her most important population groups. It is a fitting tribute to these people.

Shipwrecks of the Cunard Line, by Sam Warwick and Mike Roussel. Published by The History Press, Stroud, Gloucester, UK. © 2012. Hardbound. 146 pp. + appendices, glossary, bibliography and index. Approx. 75 black-and-white, 130 color photographs. ISBN 978-0-7524-6578-4. Available from amazon.com ($25.34) and amazon.co.uk (£14.00) plus shipping.

For nearly 175 years, Britain's Cunard Line has had an enviable peacetime passenger safety record. Yet accidents and the vicissitudes of war do figure in the company's long history. This book aims to please two audiences: ship history buffs, and recreational divers. It succeeds very well at both tasks.

After a concise, well-written introductory chapter about the company's history, and another describing the techniques, benefits and hazards of wreck diving, authors Warwick and Roussel offer fascinating chapters on some 18 Cunard vessels, ranging from the little-known *Curlew* to the infamous *Lusitania.* Many vessels of whom we've never heard – often freighters lost in the First World War – share the spotlight with such immortal passenger liners as *Campania, Caronia* and *Lancastria.* Details of how each came to its demise, enhanced in many instances by first-person accounts, are followed by exceptional color photographs of their wrecks today and fascinating artifacts, shown either *in situ* or after their recovery. Of special interest is the chapter dealing with *Carpathia,*



highlighted by a color painting of the wreck and photos taken during the 2007 artifact recovery expedition. Bonus features include maps locating the "featured wrecks," a fleet list, and a chapter dealing with vessels whose wrecks have been removed and cleared, whose whereabouts are not known, or which lie beyond modern dive technology's capabilities.

The photos are exceptional, the text crisp, well-researched and interesting. Sam Warwick (whose father and grandfather were Cunard commodores) and Mike Roussel have written a book that's full of history and the excitement of exploration.

Their book is highly recommended.

– Reviews by Charles A. Haas

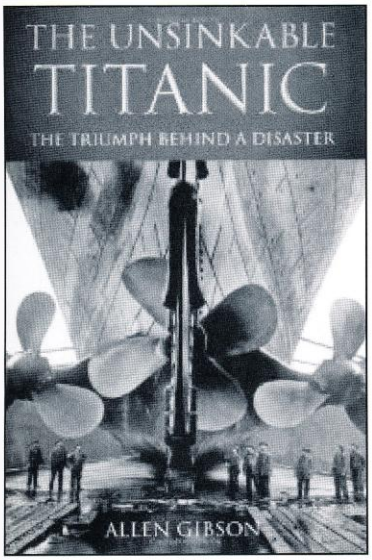
The Unsinkable Titanic – The Triumph Behind a Disaster, by Allen Gibson. The History Press (www.thehistorypress.co.uk), 304 pages, hardback, $29.95, also also available through Amazon.com. ISBN No. 978-0-7524-5625-6.

In this year of *Titanic* overabundance, it was a refreshing treat to read this new book from The History Press.

Much has been written on *Titanic* over the years, and you would think that every angle, question or concern would have been answered by now – well, almost. Allen Gibson's new book has taken the White Star liner's story to a new and, in my opinion, more complete level. He goes through the entire design process at Harland & Wolff for the *Olympic*-class ships, but focuses totally upon what made *Titanic* stand out and the improvements to the first-class accommodations that made her the most sumptuous ocean liner to sail the North Atlantic. He also discusses all the improvements made in second and third class as well.

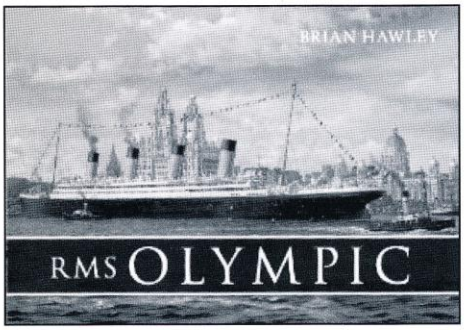
He discusses the men of Harland & Wolff and what drove them to succeed. He also points out the glaring faults in lifeboat provisioning and the arguments between those in power to provide enough boats for all on board. He examines the British Board of Trade's regulations governing lifeboats, and the antiquated rules that were in effect when *Titanic* sailed on her first and last voyage.

I learned quite a lot from this new book and I've been an avid reader of all things *Titanic* for over 50 years. The question of steering and maneuverability is nicely explained. The author takes on the whole story of *Titanic's* brief life and explains just who did what and when they did it. The *Californian* incident is explained in a different light, as well. Depending upon your preconceived thoughts on this matter, wait until you read what Mr. Gibson has to say on the matter. You may change your mind.



He also takes you into the American and British hearings after the sinking and the blatant claims of "whitewash," especially on the British side.

This was a fascinating read from cover to cover and well worth inclusion in your *Titanic* library.



RMS Olympic, by Brian Hawley, Amberley Publishing, United Kingdom, soft cover, 128 pages, $34.95. Available directly from the author at: Brian Hawley, PO Box 578, Winterville, NC 28590, e-mail rmscaronia@yahoo.com. ISBN No. 978-1-4456-0093-2.

This new soft-cover book is totally devoted to White Star Line's RMS *Olympic*. She had a long and illustrious career spanning over 25 years, the sole survivor of a three-ship class of super liners designed by Harland & Wolff.

Olympic was a marvel from the beginning, the largest and most sumptuous ocean liner to date. Never built for speed, *Olympic* was built for the comfort of her passengers. First-class accommodations were the most elaborate and innovative. She had two verandah cafés, a Turkish bath, squash racket court, swimming pool, à la carte restaurant and luxury suites. Her second class was as luxurious as first class on anything then sailing the Atlantic. Third class or steerage was also greatly improved, providing cabin accommodation instead of dormitories with bunk beds. This book contains a lot of information that I never knew before on her career, from design, launch, completion, accommodation and maiden voyage.

After her newer sister ship *Titanic* was lost, her massive internal rebuilding and installation of lifeboats for all is addressed. Her World War I service is covered and, finally, there is an explanation of the very controversial dazzle painting concepts used for merchant ships.

The book continues through the roaring '20s and *Olympic's* conversion to oil fuel, as well as other modernizations that helped keep her up-to-date with the newer ships being built in France, Germany and Italy.

Many never-before-seen photos from private sources, including several from the Joseph A. Carvalho Collection of TIS, fills this little gem of a book beautifully. It has clear and concise text loaded with many delightful anecdotes, obviously written by someone who loves his subject matter a lot. This new book is well worth adding to your White Star library. You will not be disappointed.

– Reviews by Michael V. Ralph