

# **Titanic and the Mystery Ship: Mystery Solved**

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## 1. New book, old controversy

One of the most perplexing and enduring controversies of the *Titanic* disaster is the role played by the nearby ship, the *Californian*. Did she see the *Titanic*'s distress rockets and do nothing about them? Was she the 'mystery ship' seen from *Titanic* as she slowly sank? The British and American inquiries certainly thought so, and condemned Captain Lord of the *Californian* accordingly. But his defenders emerged soon afterwards, and debate has raged passionately ever since.

As the centenary of the disaster fast approaches, it may have been thought that everything that could possibly have been said about the topic had already been said. But no – 2006 saw the publication of Senan Molony's *Titanic and the Mystery Ship*, which in its 352 pages purports to explore 'for the first time' the 'totality of the evidence'<sup>1</sup> to arrive once and for all at a clear and indisputable answer: *Captain Stanley Lord was wrongly condemned*. The *Californian* was certainly *not* the *Titanic*'s nearby 'mystery ship', and there was nothing Lord could have done to save any of her passengers or crew. 'One by one, each pillar supporting the case against *Californian* is examined and effectively dismissed,' writes a reviewer on the Amazon website.<sup>2</sup> 'Molony has made his case, and a powerful one it is.'

According to Molony then, at last the mystery has been solved.

But before we look at what he has to say, let us briefly remind ourselves of the key events of that now famous night on the North Atlantic – the 'night to remember.'

## 2. The stage

Imagine the scene: late Sunday evening, 14 April 1912, mid-Atlantic. It is an unusually calm and dark night with no moon and absolutely no wind. The water is glassy. Charles Victor Groves, third officer of the medium-sized steamer *Californian*, stares into the darkness. His ship, bound for Boston from London, is stopped for the night because of an icefield in its path. Late in his watch, toward the south, he sees a ship approach from the east and, at 11.40pm or thereabouts, stop and appear to put out her lights. Just after midnight he hands over the watch to second officer Herbert Stone. Stone continues to watch the ship to the south. Nothing much happens until, at about 12.45am, he sees a rocket. And then more rockets are fired from the ship – all white, all bursting into stars.

He whistles down the speaking pipe to Captain Stanley Lord dozing in the chartroom below and tells him. The captain stays below. Stone tries to contact the other ship with the Morse lamp but can't get a response, although her masthead light seems to flicker. 'Look at her now,' he says to James Gibson, the apprentice keeping watch with him. 'She looks queer'. 'Yes,' the apprentice agrees, 'she seems to have a big side out of the water.'<sup>3</sup> 'Well,' Stone replies, 'a ship is not going to fire rockets at sea for nothing.'<sup>4</sup> More rockets are fired and then, at about 2.20am, the ship disappears. Strangely, just over an hour later, Stone and the apprentice see some more rockets fired from a different ship in the same location.

On the same evening, in the same general area of the ocean but somewhere to the south, the *Titanic* is steaming westward for New York. At 11.40pm, or thereabouts, she strikes an iceberg and stops. She begins to sink. The *Titanic*'s officers notice the lights of another vessel and so, at about 12.45am, begin to fire distress rockets. The rockets are all white, bursting into stars. *Titanic* officers try to Morse the other ship but can get no response, although a masthead light seems to flicker. More rockets are fired, but the ship does not come. At 2.20am the *Titanic* sinks. The *Carpathia* arrives at about 3.40am and fires rockets to indicate her presence to *Titanic* survivors in lifeboats.

## 3. The battle

No one challenges the general purport of this narrative of events. And to a disinterested, unprejudiced observer the concordance of times and events might well seem conclusive: surely, the *Californian* watched the *Titanic* sink? It certainly seemed this way to the men who conducted the inquiries on either side of the Atlantic, and they stated their conclusions in the clearest terms. Yet in the months, years and decades following the disaster a significant body of opinion arose adamantly proclaiming the exact opposite. It is absolutely clear, say Lord's defenders, that the *Californian* did *not* see the *Titanic*. The coincidences are an illusion. The times were different on each ship. The rocket firing ship did not look like a passenger liner. Anyway, she moved, so she could not have been the *Titanic*. Also, the rockets seen weren't distress rockets. They weren't high enough. They weren't loud enough. They weren't regular enough. There must have been another ship firing rockets. Or another two ships. The *Californian* was 19 or 20, no 30, no 32, no 37, or perhaps even 45! miles away<sup>5</sup> – so she could not possibly have seen the famous ship. Senator Smith in Washington and Lord Mersey in London were blind to the

true facts. They were hopelessly biased. Lord was the scapegoat of the century, and his condemnation one of the greatest injustices in maritime history.

Such is the story of Lord's defenders – the 'Lordites' – who emerged surprisingly quickly after the publication of the US and British reports condemning Lord. At his home in Cornwall, Mr A.M. Foweraker, a solicitor and self-styled 'sea lawyer', quickly filled two notebooks<sup>6</sup> with meticulous navigational calculations and diagrams, and became convinced that the *Californian* did not see the *Titanic*. He published his findings anonymously in a series of articles in *The Nautical Magazine*,<sup>7</sup> and could properly be regarded as the very first of the Lordites – apart, perhaps, from Lord himself. However, the real defence of Lord did not begin until almost half a century later, when Lord, now an old man, saw William MacQuitty's 1958 film, *A Night To Remember*, based on Walter Lord's book, and was angry about the way he was portrayed. He visited the Mercantile Marine Service Association ('MMSA') in Liverpool and said he 'wanted something done about it.'<sup>8</sup> There he found Leslie Harrison, a very sympathetic listener, who took up the case with great energy and commitment. Even after the death of Lord in 1962, Harrison continued the struggle and succeeded eventually in having the case reappraised by the Marine Accident Investigation Branch of the British Ministry of Transport. Their 1992 findings were inconclusive, and Harrison was much disappointed.<sup>9</sup> He felt that he had proved beyond any doubt what Lord had known all along: Lord was innocent. And Harrison was certainly not alone in his views: as the author of *A Night to Remember* himself puts it, Captain Lord 'was backed by a small but articulate band of marine writers.'<sup>10</sup>

There also emerged, however, those who strongly resisted the claims of the Lordites.<sup>11</sup> Chief among these was Leslie Reade, barrister, author and playwright, who worked for many years on his own book about the *Californian*, published eventually as *The Ship That Stood Still*.<sup>12</sup> So offensive did Harrison find Reade's book that he tried to stop its publication<sup>13</sup> and, when it eventually did reach the shelves, he promptly sued the publishers for libel.<sup>14</sup> The battle between Lordites and non-Lordites had become characterised by an intense and personal animosity, which exists to this day.<sup>15</sup>

## 4. The real mystery

Into this prickly fray comes Molony's *Titanic and the Mystery Ship*. Primarily by reviewing in detail the transcript of both British and American inquiries, the

book purports to examine anew all aspects of the *Californian* affair. However, one of the unusual features of this book is that it makes almost no reference to the extensive history of the controversy, or the key proponents on either side of the debate. Strangely, the substantial existing literature on the topic is largely ignored. The difficulty with this is that a reader fresh to the subject might well think Molony's ideas are new and uncontested, when in fact they are neither.

But the more significant problem with Molony's book is that its thesis – and that of the Lordites generally – is simply unworkable. The evidence, considered dispassionately and in its entirety, overwhelmingly proves that the *Titanic* and *Californian* were within visual range of each other, and that the *Californian* saw the *Titanic*'s distress rockets and did nothing about them. Molony's book demonstrates clearly the difficulties involved in trying to assert the opposite: in order to explain away the extraordinary concordance between what the *Californian* saw and what the *Titanic* and *Carpathia* did, Molony is compelled to develop hypotheses of the most complex and tortuous kind which, among other things, postulate multiple mystery ships and impossible coincidences.

It is unnecessary to go to such lengths: there is a more straightforward explanation of the mystery. One ship fired rockets. That is uncontested. Another ship watched rockets being fired. That is also uncontested. The simple and true conclusion is that the one ship saw the other.

The real – and unsolved – mystery is why this conclusion has met with so much resistance and derision for so many years.

## 5. Which way should we look?

It is instructive to begin at the end. The final chapter of *Titanic and the Mystery Ship* does two things: it brings to a climax Molony's virulent attack on Lord Mersey, the British Wreck Commissioner, and states clearly and simply, in the final sentence, the book's central idea: that the identity of the ship seen from *Titanic* 'remains one of the last secrets of the sea.'<sup>16</sup> Of the attack on Lord Mersey more will be said shortly, but for now it is important to note that Molony's focus is on what *was seen from the Titanic* – rather than what was seen from the *Californian*. This approach is what gives the book its title, and is stated clearly in the text itself: 'And it is worth repeating – the issue is the *Titanic*'s mystery ship,'<sup>17</sup> and later, 'it is undoubtedly right that we shouldn't rush away from the *Titanic* witnesses to get to the *Californian*.'<sup>18</sup> This is in

direct contrast to the non-Lordites, who concentrate on what was seen from the *Californian*. The title of Reade's book, for instance – *The Ship That Stood Still* – tells us his emphasis is on the inactive *Californian*, and indeed Reade directly states that the 'overriding comment must still be made, and should be kept in mind: whatever it was the *Titanic* saw, and whenever it was, is important and interesting, but what is decisive is what the *Californian* saw.'<sup>19</sup>

So why this difference in emphasis? Why does Molony want to focus on what was seen from the *Titanic*?

## 6. The view from the *Titanic*

From the *Titanic* there survived more than 700 witnesses, many of whom gave evidence about the lights of the 'mystery ship' which did not come to their aid. Unsurprisingly, there are inconsistencies. Some thought it a sailing vessel, others a schooner, or a cod banker, or a fisherman – and others a steamer.<sup>20</sup> Some say it was only a few miles away, some say it was further. Some say it appeared, some say it disappeared.<sup>21</sup> From such an array it is easy to select testimony which is inconsistent with the light being the *Californian*. And that is precisely what the Lordites do. Their key tactic is to find evidence that the light *moved* – because no one denies the *Californian* was stopped. Molony devotes his early chapters to this point. He says that the *Titanic* lookouts did not see the *Californian* prior to the collision – the light was only seen afterwards, meaning it must have *approached* the *Titanic* – and when the light *was* seen, it was seen to move. Therefore, the light was not the stationary *Californian*. And that, Molony says, is that.

These points are interesting, but they are not new and they are not persuasive. Harrison in 1962 says it is a 'vital point' that the light was not seen until after the *Titanic* had struck the berg.<sup>22</sup> In his First Petition to the Board of Trade he adds that the *Titanic* and her mystery ship 'must have sighted each other at about the same time. No technical knowledge is needed to understand this point.'<sup>23</sup> Molony makes the same 'obvious' point,<sup>24</sup> but nowhere does he consider the counter-arguments. Reade, for example, says, 'No technical knowledge, in fact, is needed to understand this is a bad point.'<sup>25</sup> The *Titanic* was a huge passenger liner brightly lit, the *Californian* was not. One would expect the *Californian* to see the *Titanic* first. Further, the lights of the *Californian* may have been camouflaged among the stars. The ship was stopped and it was an unusually calm and clear night, with no moon. The stars were spectacularly bright against

the black sky. Lord himself said it was a 'very deceiving night'<sup>26</sup> – 'it was hard to define where the sky ended and the water commenced ... I was sometimes mistaking the stars low down on the horizon for steamer's lights.'<sup>27</sup> The lookouts on the *Titanic* may have been similarly confused. Or perhaps they simply didn't see the light at all. If the *Californian* was, as was concluded, ten miles or more away, her lights would not at all be obvious. And, after all, the lookouts missed the iceberg. Reade gently suggests that perhaps Fleet, at least, 'was not the best lookout in the world.'<sup>28</sup> Further, there is significant evidence that the light was seen at the time the *Titanic* hit the berg, if not shortly thereafter. This is discussed in detail by Reade,<sup>29</sup> a discussion which Molony simply ignores.

The chief witness for the Lordites' 'moving light' case is the *Titanic*'s fourth officer, Joseph Boxhall. Again, Molony follows the earlier Lordites' lead. Boxhall said that the ship seen from *Titanic* was 'approaching us,'<sup>30</sup> that she 'seemed to be meeting us ... coming toward us.'<sup>31</sup> Molony places enormous reliance on this evidence: he simply cannot conceive that Boxhall may have been mistaken. 'And do we also imagine that Boxhall is next in error by managing to see the immobile *Californian*, yet somehow imagining her to be moving instead of stationary?'<sup>32</sup> In fact, that is precisely what we do imagine. The *Californian*'s bow was slowly drifting to starboard, showing her green then red sidelight to any vessel to the south. It is unusual to see a ship drifting in mid-Atlantic, and it would be entirely natural for Boxhall to conclude from the changing sidelights<sup>33</sup> that the observed ship was making way through the water. Why wouldn't she be? Boxhall did not know, at the time, about the ice field which had stopped the *Californian*. The *Titanic* never reached it. Moreover, when his evidence is examined closely, it can be seen that whatever movement he thought he observed was not much: it took place over a long period – at least the hour or so it took to fire the rockets. He says, 'I do not think she was doing much steaming ... she had probably got into the ice, and turned around'<sup>34</sup> – which is pretty much exactly what the *Californian* did. Reade spends pages<sup>35</sup> analysing Boxhall's evidence, observing, '[i]t is, in fact, only Boxhall, who speaks in detail of a moving ship, but the impression is not permanent.'<sup>36</sup> He concludes, '[i]ndeed, the "moving" ship becomes, even in Boxhall's own description, a drifting ship, making a slow, irregular, rudderless turn; in fact, nothing but a ship that had stopped and was slowly swinging ... Carefully considering all of the evidence, and not just part of it, the conclusion must be that Boxhall mistook a stationary, but swinging, steamer for a moving one.'<sup>37</sup>

There is, too, much other evidence which suggest that the light seen was not moving at all. Molony ignores, dismisses or belittles it. *Titanic*'s second officer, Lightoller, for instance, says the light was 'perfectly stationary, as far as I can recollect'<sup>38</sup> but this is dismissed because Lightoller was 'phenomenally busy'.<sup>39</sup> The third officer, Pitman, says of the light, 'there was no motion in it, no movement,'<sup>40</sup> but Molony quotes only the part of his evidence referring to how close the light seemed.<sup>41</sup> The lookout Fleet said the light 'did not seem to be moving at all,'<sup>42</sup> the AB Buley said, 'she was stationary all night,'<sup>43</sup> the steward Crawford said the lights 'seemed to be stationary'<sup>44</sup> and the passenger Edith Russel said 'there it was, that light, stuck there all night, didn't budge.'<sup>45</sup> Molony says nothing of evidence such as this, other than to counsel us not to give heed to evidence of 'Titanic cooks or bedroom stewards, nor barbers nor greasers, nor even landlubber passengers.'<sup>46</sup> In fact, he says, we should avoid giving credibility to those 'who commented on the basis of casual glances or impressions', and '[e]ssentially this means concentrating on fourth officer Boxhall, whose account is unwavering.'<sup>47</sup> That is, in short: ignore the evidence that doesn't fit the 'movement' thesis and focus on the skerrick that does.

It is worth spending some time on this point precisely because it is the 'non-movement' issue which was absolutely central to Lord's own conception of his innocence. 'Now how could it possibly be the *Californian* that they saw?' he asked in exasperation of Harrison, his friend and defender. '*Californian* never moved. This steamer approached them. You don't want any technical adviser to point it out – it's all bunk, isn't it? ... Dammit, that clears everything, doesn't it? Clears everything.'<sup>48</sup> Needless to say, it doesn't, and in fact the preponderance of evidence lies the other way. The ship seen from *Titanic* did not move. It stood still. Drifting. Watching.

Molony's conclusion that the 'mystery ship' moved, unsound as it is, very quickly becomes unquestioned truth, its precarious foundations soon hidden beneath seemingly innocuous generalisations: 'The *Titanic* witnesses claim that their strange ship was moving ...'<sup>49</sup> This is simply not an accurate summary of the evidence. But, to make an important point again, what is surprising is not so much Molony's selective use of evidence – this is standard Lordite practice – but his failure to address, or even consider, the extensive discussion in the existing literature analysing the very points he raises. The 'moving light' argument, for instance, has been addressed articulately and persuasively by Reade and others,<sup>50</sup> and Molony's practice of simply ignoring these writers robs his arguments of any real legitimacy.

## 7. The view from the *Californian*

As we have seen, having as his focus what was seen from the *Titanic* gives Molony scope to argue that the 'mystery ship' moved and was therefore not the *Californian*. But there is another, and more pressing reason to focus on what was seen from the *Titanic*, and that is that the lights seen by the *Titanic* witnesses were not particularly unusual or special. There is nothing to mark them as belonging conclusively to the *Californian*: all ships have red, green and white steaming lights. This allows room to argue it was some other ship that the *Titanic* witnesses saw.

Look in the reverse direction, however, and things become very different. There are but two *Californian* witnesses during the critical midnight watch<sup>51</sup> and their evidence as to what they saw is roughly consistent. They saw lights that were unusual and special – that 'looked rather unnatural, as some were being shut in and others being opened out,'<sup>52</sup> disappearing side lights,<sup>53</sup> lights which looked peculiar and unnatural,<sup>54</sup> lights which seemed 'very queer out of the water,'<sup>55</sup> lights indicating a ship seemingly having 'a big side out of the water,'<sup>56</sup> a strange change in the 'glare of lights in the after part,'<sup>57</sup> followed by a 'gradual disappearing of all her lights.'<sup>58</sup> Lordites see nothing significant in these disturbing visions from the most important witnesses in the whole drama, but no matter, because more important than all of these strange sightings is the fact that Stone and the apprentice saw rockets: white rockets, climbing into the sky, and bursting into white stars. This was not normal. Even Stone, the key watcher of the rockets, knew that they were not being sent up for fun.<sup>59</sup> His very first thought was that 'the ship might be in trouble.'<sup>60</sup> It was clear that, at 1 o'clock on a Monday morning, in mid-Atlantic, near ice, they were very significant. It is the rockets which, in the end, clinch the case against the *Californian* and even Molony seems ultimately to yield to their probative force. For him and the Lordites, therefore, it is much more fruitful to focus on the minor mysteries of the lights seen from the *Titanic*.

But more of the rockets shortly.

## 8. Attacking Lord Mersey

The second telling feature of Molony's concluding chapter is his attack on Lord Mersey. It is by no means a new Lordite tactic to criticise those whose ideas or

conclusions do not accord with their own, but Molony raises it to a new level of intensity, and Mersey is one of his main targets. It is not difficult to see why. The coincidences of the case are too much for Mersey – for him, ‘the truth of the matter is plain ... the ship seen by the “Californian” was the “Titanic.”’ And had she responded to the rockets, he adds, using words infamous in Lordite literature, ‘she might have saved many if not all of the lives that were lost.’<sup>61</sup>

This conclusion condemns Lord; and so any defence of Lord must necessarily undermine it and its author. Harrison says, ‘Mersey’s condemnation of Captain Lord in 1912 surely represents the grossest miscarriage of justice in the history of British marine inquiries,’<sup>62</sup> and Molony follows suit. He paints Mersey as a ruthless representative of the big end of town – ‘advocating nothing less than a freemasonry of big shipping,’ dining with Lord Pirrie and J. Bruce Ismay.<sup>63</sup> The British Inquiry was a battle between Lord and Mersey: Lord, the underdog, with none of the machinery of state behind him; and Mersey, representing the Establishment, keen to crush the small man. ‘Someone is going to hang!’<sup>64</sup> was Mersey’s mindset, and it certainly was not going to be Mersey’s friends in the English upper classes: not Lord Pirrie, the builder, nor Ismay, the owner, nor the Board of Trade, nor, even, the *Titanic*’s dead captain. But Stanley Lord was available – an easy choice – and for Mersey, ‘the offer of the *Californian* as scapegoat ... was too tempting to turn down.’<sup>65</sup> This, too, is Lord’s own view of the inquiry: ‘They wanted a goat, that was my opinion. That’s what Strachan said: “They wanted a bloody goat, Lord, and they got you!”’<sup>66</sup>

According to Molony, Mersey begins with a ‘prefabricated hypothesis,’<sup>67</sup> indulges in ‘prejudice in its purest sense,’<sup>68</sup> ‘deliberately misrelate[s] the evidence for his own ends,’<sup>69</sup> makes ‘altogether fraudulent’<sup>70</sup> use of the evidence, ‘artfully arrange[s] chosen slices of evidence,’<sup>71</sup> and makes ‘horrible misjudgments,’<sup>72</sup> not resting until he has ‘finally skewered the *Californian*’<sup>73</sup> and ‘got his man’.<sup>74</sup>

None of this is justified. It is true that Mersey gets himself into a muddle at times. He seems, for instance, to fail to grasp the significance of the further rockets seen at 3.20am – the rockets of the *Carpathia*<sup>75</sup> – and he mistakenly assumes the *Titanic* had two masthead lights.<sup>76</sup> He is not a seaman or navigator, and is at times confused – for example, about the relative aspects of ships and their sidelights.<sup>77</sup> But to leap from these shortcomings to the conclusion that Mersey deliberately and wickedly concocted the whole case against Lord is a long leap indeed. Possible reasons for such a dedicated

and extended course of judicial perversion are never explored or explained by Molony, beyond the nebulous and unproven ‘need for a scapegoat.’

We are told on page 9 of *Titanic and the Mystery Ship* that its author lives in Dublin, is a political correspondent with the *Irish Independent*, and has written books about the Irish on board both the *Titanic* and *Lusitania*. He is not, perhaps, a man whom we would therefore expect to have enormous respect or sympathy for the English aristocracy. But Molony’s attacks on Mersey are sustained and at times vicious, and this detracts from, rather than adds to, any merit his arguments may have. The personal attacks often supplant any dispassionate analysis of the evidence Mersey is considering. For instance, Captain Moore of the *Mount Temple* gives invaluable information about the relationship between the position of the *Californian*, the *Titanic* SOS coordinates and the position of *Carpathia*, but Molony’s emphasis is on Moore’s ‘favourable’ treatment compared to Lord’s – this being evidence of an ‘egregious double standard.’<sup>78</sup> Similarly, testimony about the failure of the *Californian* to record the rocket sightings in her log books is seen by Molony as an opportunity for Mersey to ‘deliberately misrelate evidence for his own ends.’<sup>79</sup> This determination to denounce Mersey at times leads to arguments which verge on the ridiculous: to praise Lord for making ‘every effort’<sup>80</sup> to ‘dash twice through the ice barrier,’<sup>81</sup> and by implication to criticise Moore for not doing so once, is entirely to miss the point: Moore responded immediately to wireless distress signal received, and, coming from the west, did not need to cross the icefield to get to the SOS position. This position was almost 13 miles west of the *Titanic*’s actual position, but that was not Captain Moore’s fault. The *Californian*, on the other hand, did not respond to the distress rockets at all – but if she had made for them, she would not have been misled by the inaccurate SOS position. The rockets were the surest indicator of *Titanic*’s position. There was no need to ‘dash’ through the icefield, once, twice or at all, since she and *Titanic* were on the same side of it. No wonder ‘she got not thanks for it!’<sup>82</sup> Similarly, Molony criticises Mersey for making ‘a great deal’ of *Californian*’s missing scrap log, but not making a fuss about the *Titanic*’s. Well, the *Titanic* sank and took her log books with her, but the *Californian* stayed well and truly afloat, her log books high, dry and intact – and without a single entry about the highly unusual rockets.

The simple truth is that the *Californian* affair is not a case of David versus Goliath, of Lord versus Mersey. The case against Lord does not emerge from the steamrolling of the powerless by the powerful. It arises from the evidence, viewed calmly, dispassionately, and in its

entirety. Something strange happened that night on the *Californian* – a puzzle, a moral puzzle, a puzzle of personalities, perhaps – but if a crime was committed, it was not committed by Lord Mersey.

## 9. Attacking Knapp's map

Of course, Lord Mersey was not the only official to make adverse findings against Lord. In the days and weeks following the disaster a subcommittee of the United States Senate conducted its own inquiry under the leadership of Senator Smith. Smith concluded that the *Californian's* 'officers and crew saw the distress signals of the *Titanic* and failed to respond to them in accordance with the dictates of humanity, international usage, and the requirements of law ... Had assistance been promptly proffered ... that ship may have had the proud distinction of rescuing the lives of the passengers and crew of the *Titanic* ...'<sup>83</sup> Senator Smith is, therefore, unsurprisingly, another Lordite villain. However, Molony reserves the real energy of his attack not for Smith, but for the man Smith relied on for assistance on technical navigational points – the US Navy Hydrographer, John Knapp. Knapp produced for the US inquiry a map showing his opinion of the relative positions of the icefield and the key ships in the drama. The map shows a 'hypothetical position' for the *Californian* – calculated using evidence of ships' positions, ranges of sidelights, observed bearings of lights and so on – which places her closer to the *Titanic* than Lord's estimated overnight position put her.<sup>84</sup>

For this crime Knapp is subjected by Molony to an unprecedented torrent of abuse and ridicule. Knapp's hypothetical position is 'doubly ridiculous' – no, 'triple idiocy' – and 'utterly invalid.'<sup>85</sup> His conclusions are 'complete claptrap', based on 'suspicious' figures 'plucked from the air'<sup>86</sup> and 'pseudo science.'<sup>87</sup> He is 'utterly out of touch;' his ideas are 'nonsense,' a 'concoction' – not only a 'castle in the air' but one which is 'built on sand.'<sup>88</sup> Knapp himself is 'audacious', 'grotesque,'<sup>89</sup> 'shameless'<sup>90</sup> and 'glaringly prejudicial.'<sup>91</sup> As Molony warms to his theme, he shows less and less restraint. Knapp is 'too stupid';<sup>92</sup> if he is not 'merely an imbecile' then he is a 'villain'<sup>93</sup> who 'deliberately fudged the facts.'<sup>94</sup> Senator Smith would have done better to rely on the 'shoe-shine boy outside the Inquiry hall.'<sup>95</sup> Perhaps the most extraordinary of all of Molony's criticisms is the accusation that Knapp was 'deskbound,'<sup>96</sup> arriving at a 'magic solution from an office in Washington.'<sup>97</sup>

Knapp is not around to defend himself, but if he were, he might observe, among other things, that a desk in Dublin

is not a whole lot closer to the middle of the Atlantic than a desk in Washington.

Such attacks are neither edifying nor helpful. Knapp's calculations and conclusions may differ from Molony's – after all, mid-ocean navigation was not an exact science and Knapp's is only one attempt among many to estimate the position of the key ships that night – but this surely does not justify such vitriolic criticism. Needless to say, there are others who have prepared maps that broadly support Knapp's key conclusion that *Californian* was within visual range of the *Titanic*.<sup>98</sup> These are ignored by Molony.

Lord himself prepared a map,<sup>99</sup> and it is no surprise that Molony thinks it a masterpiece of accurate navigation. It shows the 'accuracy of Lord's instincts'<sup>100</sup> – and Lord, after all, unlike Knapp, was 'there at the time.'<sup>101</sup> There are, however, some points which Molony does *not* make about this map, and which really ought to be made. First, it is precisely because Lord was 'there at the time' that his evidence in general, and this map in particular, should be treated with great circumspection. He *was* there, on the spot, and he did nothing about the rockets. His conscience demanded that it not be the *Titanic* seen from his ship, that she be pushed as far away as possible. Second, it is generally acknowledged that the icefield was aligned roughly north/south,<sup>102</sup> but Lord's map shows in addition an enormous east-west band of ice – labelled in capitals 'THICK ICE' – between Lord's estimate of the *Californian* and *Titanic* positions. There is no evidence whatsoever for this ice barrier, apart from Lord's say so, and it is hard not to see it as a defensive measure, as if he were saying 'look, we couldn't have got there even if we *had* responded to the rockets!' The map, it will be remembered, was prepared by Lord in Boston after the story of the rockets 'got out' against his wishes, at which stage Lord 'knew at once there would be enquiry over it.'<sup>103</sup> It had suddenly become urgent for Lord to marshal and strengthen his defences. Third, although it may be true that the 1985 discovery of the wreck shows Boxhall's estimate of *Titanic's* longitude was inaccurate – and Molony naturally emphasises this as evidence of Lord's navigational supremacy – the difficulty for Lord is that his estimate and the wreck position places the *Titanic* on the *same side of the north/south icefield as the Californian*. In other words, if the *Californian* had responded to and steered for the *rockets* she would not have been misled by Boxhall's SOS position, which inaccurately placed the *Titanic* on the other side of the field. She would not have had to push twice through the ice – heading west to the SOS position then back east to the actual position – an exercise which took considerable time and for which she 'got no thanks.' This point is never made by the Lordites,



who instead emphasize the time it took to reach the wreck site once the message was received in the morning. Molony, for instance, states that ‘the *Californian* quite simply took two and a half hours ... to reach the *Carpathia*’s side.’<sup>104</sup> This suggests a distance of over 25 miles. It is doubtful she in fact took this long,<sup>105</sup> but in any event the important point is that she did not steam in a straight line. She steamed west through the icefield, turned south to the SOS position, looked for the *Titanic*, found nothing, then realised the *Carpathia* to the northeast was picking up the *Titanic*’s boats, and so pushed back through the field. All of this took time and the plain fact is that if Captain Lord had responded to the rockets it would have been unnecessary. He would have simply steered for the rockets, remaining at all times on the eastern side of the icefield. It is easy to see why Lord, in such circumstances, might think it important on his map to insert an additional ‘thick ice’ barrier to the south, between him and the *Titanic*.

## 10. The question of navigation

Maps such as these form only a small part of the literature dealing with the location of *Californian* and *Titanic* that night. There is insufficient space here to review this material in any detail, but it is vital to remember that mid-ocean navigation in 1912 was not a precise science. Split second, yard-by-yard accuracy was simply not possible. There were no electronic aids to navigation: no DECCA, no LORAN, no SAT NAV, and there definitely was no GPS, which has today accustomed us to touch-of-a-button position fixing with pinpoint accuracy. Nor were there gyrocompasses: steering and the taking of bearings used magnetic compasses, which are subject to the vagaries of deviation<sup>106</sup> and variation.<sup>107</sup> Without electronic aids, the only way to fix position in mid-ocean is by sextant observation, but even this process does not yield a precise point. The tolerance for error is measured in miles rather than yards. The *American Practical Navigator*, one of the most respected texts in the field, says:

Three [celestial] observations generally result in lines of position forming a triangle. If this triangle is not more than two or three miles on a side under good conditions, and five to ten miles under unfavourable conditions, there is normally no reason to suppose that a mistake has been made.<sup>108</sup>

Between fixes, the ship’s position is calculated using best estimates of the ship’s speed and course steered, taking into account currents and wind. This process is called

‘dead reckoning’, and it is position by guesswork – educated, informed guesswork, certainly, but guesswork nonetheless. This needs to be emphasised because it is easy for those who have no real experience with pre-satellite mid-ocean navigation to think of position fixes as certainties, particularly once they have been written in the ship’s log, or on a chart, or have been given as evidence in a court.

The key example for our purposes is, of course, the *Californian*’s overnight ‘stop’ position, given by Captain Lord as 42° 05’N, 50° 07’W.<sup>109</sup> Quick calculations tell us that this is about 19.7 miles from the *Titanic*’s SOS position, 41° 46’N, 50° 14’W, and about 22.8 miles from the *Titanic*’s boiler field, 41° 43.5’N, 49° 57’W, as found by Dr Ballard.<sup>110</sup> Now, it might just be possible on a clear night to see rockets at this distance, but it would be very difficult if not impossible to see ordinary steaming lights, especially sidelights. The conclusion therefore, say the Lordites, is that the *Californian* did not see the *Titanic*. It is a point certainly made by Molony.<sup>111</sup> But what must be remembered is that Lord’s position is simply a dead reckoning position – an estimate. Sextant sights giving longitude information had been taken most recently in the late afternoon.<sup>112</sup> This process in itself – a ‘running fix’ – involves taking a number of sights of the sun while estimating the ship’s ‘run’ in between. It is more of an art than a science<sup>113</sup> and Lord himself seems to acknowledge the inherent inaccuracy of this process.<sup>114</sup> In any event, he used his *noon* position (itself a running fix) to calculate the ship’s stop longitude over ten hours later,<sup>115</sup> and since the ship was heading west, even slight inaccuracies in the estimate of the ship’s speed would lead to a significant error in longitude. The difference between the longitude of the *Titanic*’s boiler field and Lord’s dead reckoning longitude is 10 minutes, which at that latitude is just over 7 miles. It could easily have been less.

In relation to latitude, a sight of the Pole Star, taken by the chief officer Stewart during the evening twilight gave a latitude of 42° 05’N.<sup>116</sup> Lord estimated that he had made good a true course of due west during the evening, and so simply used this as the latitude of the ship’s 10.20pm stop position.<sup>117</sup>

It is worth repeating: *there was absolutely no way of verifying the ‘stop’ position at the time itself* – it was simply Lord’s best estimate using the noon position and the evening Pole Star sight many hours before. His ship was in the vicinity of the confluence of the North Atlantic Current (moving northeast) and the Labrador Current (moving south)<sup>118</sup> and so estimating the effect of current would have been difficult. If, for instance, Lord set a course to be steered to take into account a north-easterly

current, but he was in fact being set south, then by the time he encountered the icefield he may have been significantly further south than he thought. There is evidence that there was a southerly current – the sea temperature was very low, suggesting they had entered the cold Labrador Current bringing ice down from the north, and the chief officer certainly thought so.<sup>119</sup> If there was such a current, the *Titanic* may well have hit the iceberg in a position somewhat north of the debris field, at 11.40pm, by which time the *Californian* may well have been set south several miles. Allow a mile or two error in the Pole Star sight, or a small error in the estimation of variation or deviation, or some leeway in the steering of the course by the helmsman, and the distance between the ships could easily shrink to twelve, ten, or even a lesser distance, from which the *Californian* could easily see the rockets and the ship firing them.

It must be emphasised that none of these are ‘errors’ in the sense of *mistakes*. They are simply *inaccuracies inherent in the practice of celestial navigation itself*. If Lord was further south than expected, this does *not* make him a poor navigator. Normally, such indeterminacy in mid-ocean position fixing would not matter and would remain unnoticed. It is only the subsequent extraordinary events that create interest in the accuracy or otherwise of Lord’s overnight position.

Lordites may say that this is ‘working hard’ to push the *Californian* as far south as possible in order to fit a preconceived theory that she saw the *Titanic*. The simple answer is that it is *not* ‘working hard’ – the margins of error identified above are not extraordinary or unusual, but ordinary and common. But in any event, if one does *no* work to move the *Californian* south a little – if she is left happily alone, twenty miles to the north, with the *Titanic* safely out of sight – then one must do an awful lot of work in another direction. One must invent another ship, a few miles to the north of the *Titanic*, which approached the *Californian* when the *Titanic* did; which stopped when the *Titanic* did; which fired rockets just like the *Titanic* did; which looked ‘odd’ and ‘queer’ with a ‘high side out of the water’ just like *Titanic* did; which showed a red sidelight to the north, like the *Titanic* did; which disappeared when the *Titanic* sank; and which did all these things while remaining completely out of sight of the hundreds of surviving witnesses standing on the sloping decks of the *Titanic*, not one of whom saw a ship firing rockets.

The Lordites are perfectly prepared to hypothesise the existence of such a ship, and others, but such theories are ‘hard work’ indeed, as we shall see.

The above points need to be made because Molony misunderstands the nature of position fixing at sea. He has too much confidence in Lord’s ‘stop’ position, and this is because he does not understand how it was arrived at. He suggests that a sight of the Pole Star would ‘give effectively exact latitude,’<sup>120</sup> which is not true, and insists that the stop position was verified by a *further* sextant sight of the Pole Star taken by Stewart at 10.30pm,<sup>121</sup> which is not possible. The transcript of Stewart’s evidence at the British Inquiry has him saying, ‘I had the Pole Star at half-past ten’<sup>122</sup> and Molony says this ‘must be one of the most overlooked answers in the whole of the British Inquiry.’<sup>123</sup> It is overlooked because it is clearly a misprint or mis-transcription: Stewart said, or meant, half-past seven. This was twilight, during the chief officer’s watch, and the very time we would expect him to take such a sight. It would have been highly *unusual* for a chief officer, who has charge of the 4-8 watch, to have been on the bridge taking sights at 10.30pm. Groves was the officer of the watch. Stewart would have most likely been asleep. More importantly, it is simply not possible to take sextant sights at night. The horizon is not sufficiently visible, particularly not on a night as dark as this one. Lord himself draws attention to the lack of horizon.<sup>124</sup> Molony suggests that there was evidence that Lord was speaking to the chief officer late in the evening, but in fact Lord’s own evidence tells us it was the chief *engineer* he was talking to.<sup>125</sup> The remainder of Stewart’s evidence, if read carefully, makes it very clear that he took the sight at 7.30pm, not 10.30pm,<sup>126</sup> a fact confirmed by Lord himself.<sup>127</sup> When Stewart says the stop position was calculated ‘not only’ by dead reckoning,<sup>128</sup> he means, not only dead reckoning from the *noon* position. He is reminding the inquiry that he took a Pole Star sight as well. No further sights were taken until the ship’s officers took sun sights late the next morning, after searching for bodies and steaming about on various courses, and this position can provide no reliable guide whatsoever to *Californian*’s overnight position.

Molony repeats and builds upon this mistake. He refers to the ‘rather obvious facts’ of the ‘repeated celestial observations’ which established the *Californian*’s stop position that evening<sup>129</sup> (in fact, there was only one) and the stop position’s ‘verification by Chief Officer Stewart’<sup>130</sup> (in fact, there was no such verification, and nor could there have been). He says that it is ‘clearly impossible’ for the *Californian* ‘to have been several miles further south than she believed’<sup>131</sup> when in fact it was not impossible, but very likely.

There are other mistakes of this sort. For instance, Molony quotes Lord’s evidence at the British Inquiry that his ship’s speed was 11 knots. He then demonstrates the

accuracy of this estimate by dividing the distance between the 6.30pm position and the stop position by the time taken, giving a result of 11.2 knots.<sup>132</sup> But this is a masterpiece of circular reasoning, because it was Lord's very own estimate of speed which was used to derive the 'stop position' in the first place. Similarly, Mr Molony has the strange idea that the rate of swing (ie, change in heading) of a drifting ship is affected by the prevailing current. He says 'the current speed may have stayed the same, with the 'rate of swing' increasing due to the changing orientation of the *Californian* to the current'<sup>133</sup> and that when she was 'broadside' to the current she would swing 'much faster as the whole length of the ship would be exposed to the force of the current.' Later he says 'the swing was faster at some points and slower at others, depending on the orientation of the *Californian* in relation to the current.'<sup>134</sup> Such statements are nonsensical to anyone who has worked at sea. A drifting ship simply moves bodily with the current. The rate of swing may be affected by the wind, or eddies or localised currents in the vicinity of the ship's hull, but not by general ocean currents such as those Molony is referring to. And yet such notions are the foundations for enormous cathedrals of calculation and surmise, leading to the ultimate conclusion that *Titanic* and *Californian* did not see each other.

There are many other examples. Their collective effect is to force us to treat Molony's navigational conclusions with extreme caution. Also, the errors he makes are often compounded by their use as platform to attack others. His mistake about the Stewart's 10.30 'fix', for instance, leads him to accuse Knapp and third officer Groves of participating in a 'mass lie, and one persisted in – perversely ...'<sup>135</sup> He goes on to say of the 'deskbound' Knapp that he has 'no credentials to offer an opinion on where any vessels were that night.'<sup>136</sup> It is a strange allegation to make – Knapp was the hydrographer of the United States Navy, no less – and again, it has to be said that Knapp is not around to defend himself. If here were, though, he might be driven to reply that *his* credentials are not those which should be called into question.

## 11. A triangle of ships

The question of navigation and of the relative position of the key ships is a vexing one. There is much literature on the point. But the Lordites tend to lose themselves in a quagmire of navigational minutiae that blinds them to obvious conclusions. They find a misplaced minute here, a few yards extra there, and a lack of perfect, precise synchronicity everywhere.<sup>137</sup> The significant evidence is

what people *saw*, and this evidence forms a factual matrix from which only one reasonable conclusion can be drawn: the *Californian* saw the *Titanic* and her rockets. For example, both Stone and Gibson saw another ship fire rockets an hour or so after the first had disappeared. What could this be, if not the rockets of the *Carpathia* announcing her location to survivors in lifeboats? Similarly, there is much compelling evidence from the other direction – of what the *Carpathia* saw. James Bisset, in *Tramps and Ladies*, the second volume of his memoirs, says:

[I]n the slowly increasing daylight at 4.30am, we had sighted the smoke of a steamer on the fringe of the pack ice, ten miles away from us to the northwards. She was making no signals, and we paid little attention to her, for we were preoccupied with more urgent matters; but at 6am we had noticed that she was under way and slowly coming towards us. When I took over the watch on the bridge of the *Carpathia* at 8am the stranger was little more than a mile from us ... She was the Leyland Line cargo-steamer *Californian* ...<sup>138</sup>

Captain Moore, too, on the *Mount Temple*, gave evidence which placed the *Californian* within visual range to the north of the *Carpathia*. He had arrived from the west at the *Titanic*'s SOS position, but could find no sign of her. 'I think ... the *Titanic* was further east than she gave her position ... In fact, I am certain she was', he told the US Senate inquiry.<sup>139</sup> 'At least 8 miles.' And we know now that he was right. '[T]he *Titanic* must have been on the other side of that field of ice, and then her position was not right which she gave.'<sup>140</sup> Then, at 'about 6 o'clock in the morning' Moore 'sighted the *Carpathia* on the other side of this great ice pack,'<sup>141</sup> and he also sees the *Californian* to the north, making her way west through the icefield. 'He was then north of the *Carpathia*, and he must have been, I suppose, about the same distance to the north of the *Carpathia* as I was to the westward of her.'<sup>142</sup>

Thus, at this early time in the morning, as Lord was just learning of the terrible disaster that had happened to the *Titanic*, here is an independent witness, not aboard either the *Carpathia* or *Californian*, testifying that the two ships were within visual range.

Needless to say, the Lordites engage in their usual attacks on the relevant witnesses. Molony points out that Bisset's account was 'published (and ghost-written at that) in 1959, nearly half a century after the disaster,'<sup>143</sup> adds that it is 'littered with other factual mistakes'<sup>144</sup> and concludes that 'it is just a garbled tale, unreliable in detail.'<sup>145</sup> None

of these criticisms is justified. Sir James Bisset,<sup>146</sup> as well as being an extraordinary seaman, rising to command of both the *Queen Elizabeth* and *Queen Mary* and being appointed Commodore of the Cunard Line, met with considerable success in the field of literature, writing many books and articles.<sup>147</sup> He was awarded an honorary degree in literature by the University of Cambridge.<sup>148</sup> Molony says his memoirs were 'ghost written', but in fact they were written 'with the advice and assistance of [his] friend, Mr P. R. Stephensen'<sup>149</sup> who helped him compile his reminiscences. Molony emphasises that Bisset's memoirs are 'half a century' old, and implies that they are therefore unreliable, but in fact Bisset 'kept documentary records' – he 'had the habit of keeping fairly complete diaries and notes of all [his] voyages since [he] first went to sea.'<sup>150</sup> Whereas Molony credits Lord for being 'there, on the spot', he gives no such credit to Bisset; and whereas Molony impeaches Bisset's 'half a century' old memoirs, he relies utterly and absolutely on Lord's 1959 affidavit, equally as old, written by a man with 1500 souls on his conscience, and with the assistance and urging of his committed defender, Leslie Harrison.<sup>151</sup>

But putting aside for the time being Molony's unfounded attacks on the characters of good men, there is some evidence that the *Californian* and *Carpathia* were not in sight of each other that morning which requires consideration. Captain Lord, for instance, says that the funnel of the ship he saw to the south at dawn – 'about 8 miles away,'<sup>152</sup> and in the position where an hour or so earlier Stone had seen a ship firing 'more' rockets – was yellow. Now, the *Carpathia*, a Cunarder, had a red funnel. That, for Molony, is enough. Clearly it was not the *Carpathia* seen by Lord, and attempts to suggest otherwise are 'unsustainable' or even 'sly.'<sup>153</sup> But anyone who has been to sea knows that, in the pale light of dawn, at such a distance, it would be very difficult to be certain about the colour of a tall, narrow funnel. Catching the light of the rising sun, it may well have looked golden. Ken Marschall, the *Titanic* artist known for his meticulous attention to detail, certainly does not give the rescue ship a bright red funnel in his painting of the rescue: in the dawn light the funnel looks a yellowy-orange.<sup>154</sup> Lord may well have formed the impression that the funnel was yellow; and if this impression tended to exculpate him from responsibility for the deaths of 1500 people, then no wonder he clung to it.

Of more interest, and much more helpful to the Lordites, is the evidence of Arthur Rostron, captain of the *Carpathia*. In New York he swore an affidavit which he subsequently affirmed at the British Inquiry.<sup>155</sup> He said:

At 5 o'clock it was light enough to see all around the horizon. We then saw two steamships to the Northward, perhaps seven or eight miles distant. Neither of them was the CALIFORNIAN. One of them was four masted steamer with one funnel and the other a two masted steamer with one funnel. I never saw the MOUNT TEMPLE to identify her. The first time that I saw the CALIFORNIAN was at about eight o'clock on the morning of 15th April. She was then about five to six miles distant, bearing WSW true, and steaming towards the CARPATHIA.<sup>156</sup>

This is certainly useful evidence for the Lordites, and Molony says 'it ought to be game, set and match.'<sup>157</sup> But it isn't, because there is further evidence as to Rostron's thoughts and beliefs, which Molony does not consider. Reade, on the other hand, does consider it, and in detail, because he obtained it personally.<sup>158</sup> He refers to information obtained from Sir Ivan Thompson, who, like Bisset, rose to command of the *Queens* and became Commodore of Cunard. Thompson is no friend of the Lordites, resigning as he did from the Mercantile Marine Service Association in protest at Leslie Harrison's misguided attempt to suggest that it was Captain Moore's *Mount Temple*, and not the *Californian*, seen from the *Titanic*.<sup>159</sup> Thompson sailed many times with not only Bisset, but with the other officers who were on the bridge of the *Carpathia* that morning – officers Dean, Barnish and Rees – and all were 'adamant that they saw the *Californian* stopped ten miles away when they arrived at the *Titanic*'s position. All three watched her approach, while they were busy with the *Titanic*'s boats.'<sup>160</sup> Perhaps more significantly, Thompson sailed under Rostron's command in several ships, 'and [they] often talked 'Titanic'.'<sup>161</sup> Thompson asked Rostron about his New York affidavit, and Rostron's reply was, 'I know. Dean and others, and some passengers, said they saw the *Californian* and watched her approaching. Well, I was mistaken. I had so much to do, I wasn't thinking of the *Californian* and didn't recognise her.'<sup>162</sup> Such evidence is, of course, hearsay, but it has value nonetheless, particularly when taken together with all the other evidence which places the stopped *Californian* and *Carpathia* in sight of each other in the early morning. It is easy to see how Rostron could have been mistaken: he saw a ship to the north with a single funnel and four masts (as had the *Californian*), but then later he saw the *Californian* arrive from the *west south west*. He did not notice that the *Californian* had in fact pushed through to the western side of the field, steamed south looking for the *Titanic* in her SOS position, and then steamed back to the east and north to reach the *Carpathia*. It would be

easy to assume that a ship coming from the west–south-west was not the same ship he had seen to the north.

There is more evidence about what was seen in the morning, but the broad import is already clear. Stewart and Lord on the *Californian* see a ship to the south, which is ‘all right now’; Bisset and his fellow officers on the *Carpathia* see a ship about ten miles to the north, which they later identify as the *Californian*; Moore, searching the *Titanic*’s SOS position, sees, at the same time, the *Carpathia* to his east and the *Californian* to the north. The picture is clear: a triangle of ships within visual range of each other in the early hours of the morning.

Of course, the Lordites say that the picture is anything but clear. Once they have analysed the exact timings of radio messages, of ship’s precise positions and speeds, and adopted without question Lord’s opinion of funnel colour, and Rostron’s statement that it was not the *Californian*, it is, they say, a confusing and complicated situation. But even if we grant all these contradictions and confusions, we can remove them all by winding the clock back a little to the critical hours of the midnight watch. For what can never be argued away by even the most multitudinous and detailed time and position calculations is that the men on the bridge of the *Californian* saw rockets.

## 12. The white rockets

The rockets are not a favourite subject of the Lordites. They are downplayed, belittled or ignored at every turn. They become fireworks entertainment for the passengers,<sup>163</sup> ‘certain rocket signals,’<sup>164</sup> ‘roman candle type flares,’<sup>165</sup> ‘flashes of light’ or simply ‘lights,’<sup>166</sup> ‘flashes in the sky,’<sup>167</sup> ‘low lying rockets,’<sup>168</sup> ‘detonators,’<sup>169</sup> ‘flares ... having no explosive content whatsoever,’<sup>170</sup> ‘occasional rocket-like signals’<sup>171</sup> or ‘shooting stars.’<sup>172</sup> Otherwise they are simply ignored. Lord’s own ‘concise summing up of the situation’ makes no mention of them: ‘*Californian* stopped, nothing in sight; *Titanic* stopped, nothing in sight; half an hour later a ship approached the *Titanic*, turned, and steamed away again. How could that ship have been the *Californian*?’<sup>173</sup> Simple, perhaps, but what about the rockets? Leslie Harrison, too, thinks very little of ‘those emotive rockets.’<sup>174</sup> The *Titanic*, he says, ‘did not carry distress rockets as such ...’<sup>175</sup> and he conjectures – wistfully and longingly – that ‘if ... you take from the *Californian* and *Titanic* such uncontradicted and consistent evidence as available before any confusing rockets were fired and seen, the following perfectly simple situation is

revealed ...’<sup>176</sup> Perhaps, but if you take away the *Titanic*’s collision with the iceberg, then the situation becomes simpler still: a ship arriving in New York with thousands of passengers and crew waving happily and excitedly. But it is the iceberg, and the rockets, and the other events of the real world, which make the drama and with which the historian must deal.

To the extent that any rockets were fired, according to the Lordites, they were fired for all sorts of reasons – but never to indicate distress. Some go to extraordinary lengths. ‘To be perfectly correct,’ writes Mr J Gillespie, ‘the rockets as fired at random from the *Titanic* signalled to all ships within her view, ‘This is my position; I am having a navigation problem. *Please stand clear*.’<sup>177</sup> Now this is a surprising turn of events: Captain Smith, the most experienced captain of the White Star Line, and his fourth officer, Mr Boxhall, by desperately firing rockets, were inadvertently telling other ships to steam away.

Molony adopts similar tactics. The rockets seen by Stone and Gibson are never distress rockets, but ‘strange signals,’<sup>178</sup> ‘white lights in the sky,’<sup>179</sup> ‘puzzling lights,’<sup>180</sup> and ‘flashes.’<sup>181</sup> They are hardly significant at all, because ‘the truth is that rockets were fired at night for all kinds of reasons.’<sup>182</sup> Stone’s sighting of them was ‘unusual but almost incidental.’<sup>183</sup> A ship which ‘merely fire[s] a rocket or two’<sup>184</sup> is nothing to worry about: she could be acknowledging the Morse lamp,<sup>185</sup> signalling that she has icebergs around her,<sup>186</sup> trying to light up the sky to ‘illuminate her way through the ice,’<sup>187</sup> trying to send a message to a distant ship – but definitely not a distress message and definitely not to the *Californian*<sup>188</sup> – or, most poignantly, she might simply be saying ‘farewell.’<sup>189</sup>

It is worthwhile noting that if rockets were indeed fired for any of these reasons that night – in the middle of the Atlantic, amongst ice – then it would have been entirely novel, for there is no evidence whatsoever that rockets had ever been used for such purposes before.

But with such a bewildering array of possibilities before them, say the Lordites, the men on the *Californian* were entirely justified in ignoring the rockets altogether. Harrison says of the rockets seen by Stone and Gibson late in their watch, ‘[e]vidently they applied common sense to the problem, shrugged their shoulders, and made no attempt to do anything about it.’<sup>190</sup> Shrugging shoulders is a response endorsed by Molony too: the rockets were merely ‘unfolding oddities’<sup>191</sup> and Stone had ‘what might be called a ‘shrug factor’’<sup>192</sup> about the rockets. And when he and Gibson saw the later rockets,<sup>193</sup> they ‘finally shrugged their shoulders after all they had been through.’<sup>194</sup>

All they had been through? This consisted, it might be recalled, of drinking coffee, chit chat about unusual lights and angles, using the Morse lamp and occasionally calling the captain. The shrug factor was pervasive: not Gibson, not Stone, and not Lord walked the few paces aft to wake the wireless man. If they had, the *Titanic*'s SOS and CQD would have come through with such volume and clarity that even the officers of the *Californian* could not mistake them for confusing signals about the surrounding ice, broken rudders, <sup>195</sup> keeping clear, farewells or celebrations. Imagine the message the wireless man would have sent in return: 'Are you firing rockets?' 'Yes' comes the answer, and off goes the *Californian* to the rescue, at full speed, through clear water, and to the correct position. At a quarter to one this could have happened; and by a quarter to two they would have been there.

For anyone who has ever made their living at sea, and who has ever been comforted by the ancient custom requiring all seamen to go to the aid of others in distress, without hesitation and without counting the cost, it is this countenancing of 'shoulder-shrugging' that most clearly shows that the Lordites have lost their way in their single-minded defence of their man. It is here that the distance between the Lordites and common sense – between them and the common dictates of morality and humanity – is at its greatest. While Stone and Gibson on the cold bridge above, and Lord in the steam-heated chartroom below, metaphorically if not literally shrugged their shoulders, fifty children, a hundred women, and over thirteen hundred men died.

It is enough to make grown men weep.

The simple point is that the *Californian*'s ignoring of the rockets cannot be justified, and in trying to justify the unjustifiable the arguments of the Lordites become convoluted, inconsistent, and false. Molony says the regulations of the time were vague,<sup>196</sup> but they were clear enough. 'When a vessel is in distress and requires assistance from other vessels ... the following shall be the signals to be used ... AT NIGHT ... (3) rockets or shells, throwing stars of any colour or description, used one at a time at short intervals.'<sup>197</sup> This is, of course, precisely what the *Titanic* did and what the *Californian* saw. Lawrence Beesley, a passenger on the *Titanic*, described the rockets in evocative detail: they were an indicator to those standing on the apparently secure decks of the great liner that they were in fact in real danger. 'Anybody knows what rockets at sea mean,'<sup>198</sup> he writes. Captain Smith, with over 40 years' experience at sea, 25 of them as captain, knew what they meant, and ordered that they be fired. Fourth officer Boxhall knew what they meant

when he fired them, and second officer Lightoller knew too: 'There is no ship allowed on the high seas to fire a rocket or anything resembling a rocket unless she requires assistance', he said in London, adding that if he had seen rockets like those fired from the *Titanic*, he would 'have seen them and known immediately.'<sup>199</sup>

But whatever was thought about the rockets on the *Titanic*, what is instructive and illuminating is what was thought by the observers on the *Californian*. The men there knew they were looking at rockets, and they knew their regulations too. In London, second officer Stone was asked about the examinations he took for his First Mate's Certificate. 'Is not part of the subjects of examination the signals of distress ... ?'<sup>200</sup> asks Thomas Scanlan, M.P., representing the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union. 'Yes' answers Stone, perhaps worried about where it was all heading, '[I] learned them.'<sup>201</sup> Scanlan struggles to understand. 'Do you mean to tell his Lordship that you did not know that the throwing up of "rockets or shells, throwing stars of any colour or description, fired one at a time at short intervals," is the proper method for signalling distress at night?'

Stone did know it. 'Yes,' he replies. 'That is the way it is always done as far as I know.'

'And you knew that perfectly well on the night of the 14th of April?'

'Yes,' is Stone's single word answer.

Now it is Lord Mersey who is perplexed. 'And is not that exactly what was happening?'

Stone is silent. He has no answer. But Scanlan won't let him go. He demands one. 'You have heard my Lord put that question. That was what was happening?'

'Yes.'

Lord Mersey drives the point home. 'The very thing was happening that you knew indicated distress?'

'If that steamer had stayed on the same bearing after showing these rockets –'

'No, do not give a long answer of that kind. Is it not the fact that the very thing was happening which you had been taught indicated distress?'

'Yes.'

'You knew it meant distress?'

'I knew that rockets shown at short intervals, one at a time, meant distress signals, yes.'

‘Do not speak generally. On that very night when you saw those rockets being sent up you knew, did you not, that those rockets were signals of distress?’

‘No.’

It is too much for Lord Mersey – ‘Now do think about what you are saying!’ he cries out – but what can Stone do? He has gone as far as he can: in the general, they were distress signals; but in the specific, they were not and could not ever be, because if he acknowledges that, then what must he tell himself about his responsibility for the 1500 who died?

Let us remember, though, that even if Stone cannot bring himself to use the actual word, ‘distress,’ he can and does say that ‘a ship is not going to fire rockets at sea for nothing’<sup>202</sup> and that they weren’t ‘being sent up for fun’<sup>203</sup> and, significantly, ‘the *first thought* that crossed [his] mind was that the ship might be in *trouble*.’<sup>204</sup> Trouble! And yet, according to Molony, ‘it simply did not occur to him that they were distress signals’<sup>205</sup> and ‘it was emphatically not Stone’s own impression’ that the ship was firing distress rockets.<sup>206</sup> For Stone, then, the rockets carried a very precise message: they meant ‘trouble,’ but emphatically not ‘distress.’

The short point is that Stone was looking at distress rockets and he knew it at the time. His own son, writing to Leslie Reade many years later, said ‘my father never at any time discussed with me or with my brother and sister his part in the “Titanic” story, but my mother tells me (and this is all that she will tell) that, as you say, he was sure distress rockets were being fired.’<sup>207</sup> Of course, what Stone did *not* know at the time, and would never have guessed in a lifetime of anxious pondering, was that the rockets came from the *Titanic* and that thousands were in danger of their lives. That knowledge would only come later.

Stone was not alone on the bridge, watching the rockets. For much of the time, Gibson, the young apprentice, stood watching with him. In a letter to Lord written within days of the disaster, and which Lord kept secret, he wrote, ‘[a]rriving on the bridge again at that time, the Second Officer told me that the other ship ... had fired five rockets’ – rockets, he says, not signals, flares or flashes – ‘... I then got the binoculars and had just got them focussed on the vessel when I observed a white flash apparently on her deck followed by a faint streak towards the sky which then burst into white stars ...’<sup>208</sup> Here we have a contemporaneous, first-hand account of what Gibson was seeing; and on the *Titanic*, we know, Boxhall was diligently firing his white rockets: ‘the flash of the detonator lit up the whole deck’ said fifth officer Lowe,

standing nearby; ‘you see a luminous tail behind them,’ said Boxhall, ‘and then they explode in the air and burst into stars.’<sup>209</sup>

Gibson, in his London evidence, suggests that he thought at the time the rockets might be company signals<sup>210</sup> – and we will examine in due course the origin of this idea – but is not a view he holds for long. After describing what Stone was saying to him about the rockets – ‘that a ship is not going to fire rockets at sea for nothing, and there must be something the matter with her’<sup>211</sup> – he is asked directly, ‘Then you thought it was a case of distress?’ He answers just as directly: ‘Yes.’<sup>212</sup>

Gibson’s evidence, in his letter to Lord and in London, is damaging to Lord’s case, which is no doubt why Lord kept the letter secret, and which is why Molony devalues and dismisses what Gibson says. Molony’s difficulties with the evidence seem chiefly to be that, first, in his London testimony Gibson speaks only of rockets and omits to mention the flash or the skyward streak,<sup>213</sup> and second, if he is close enough to see a flash on deck is he not also close enough to identify the rocket firer as a large passenger ship, rather than a tramp steamer?<sup>214</sup> These puzzles are enough for Molony to dismiss Gibson’s evidence as ‘over-imaginative’ and ‘purple’ and for him to advise us that the ‘the appropriate course is for us to discard it too ...’<sup>215</sup> But can this really be the appropriate course? Are Molony’s difficulties really problems at all? After all, Gibson only said he ‘observed a white flash *apparently* on her deck’ – it may have looked that way, even if in fact it was not on the deck – and he may well have seen a ‘flash’ of detonation without fully appreciating the size of the ship doing the firing. There is good evidence that *Titanic* was facing northwards, showing the *Californian* her darkest side,<sup>216</sup> and what Gibson thought was a small ship close by may easily have been a larger ship more distant.

But in any event, surely these are minor uncertainties compared to the broad import of Gibson’s evidence as a whole. What of his conversations with Stone about the ship looking ‘very queer out of the water’<sup>217</sup> and her lights looking ‘queer’<sup>218</sup> and ‘unnatural’?<sup>219</sup> About her ‘having a big side out of the water’?<sup>220</sup> About the ‘glare of lights on her after-deck?’<sup>221</sup> About her disappearing sidelight<sup>222</sup> and then her disappearance altogether?<sup>223</sup> What of his thought that ‘it was a case of some kind of distress’<sup>224</sup> and Stone’s words that ‘there must be something the matter with her’?<sup>225</sup> And what of his clear evidence of the three further rockets fired, towards the end of the middle watch, just before dawn?<sup>226</sup> These rockets were seen over an hour after the first steamer had ‘disappeared’, toward the south in roughly the same location, except

this time 'right on the horizon.'<sup>227</sup> The *Carpathia*, we know, was at this time steaming towards the *Titanic's* boats from the southeast, firing rockets to advertise her presence. What else could Gibson and Stone be looking at, if not the rockets of the *Carpathia*? The sighting of these rockets 'right on the horizon' forms an irrefutable link between the *Californian* and the *Carpathia*. And the sighting of the eight or so earlier rockets – from the gradually disappearing steamer with the queer lights and high side out of the water and glare on her after deck – form an irrefutable link between the *Californian* and the *Titanic*.

The 'appropriate course' is not to dismiss and belittle such evidence, but to see it for what it very clearly and obviously is: confirmation that the *Californian* saw the *Titanic*.

Consider Stewart, too, the chief officer. In his evidence he always strived to do his best for Lord. Indeed, for a man who was asleep during the critical hours and is therefore relatively immune from criticism, the fact that his loyalty to Lord should so often trump his loyalty to the truth is surprising. But let us see what he does. At 4.00am he arrives on the bridge to relieve the second officer, and discovers an anxious and puzzled Mr Stone. 'He had seen some rockets ... he said they were white rockets.'<sup>228</sup> No talk of shooting stars or Roman Candles at this stage, only rockets. And on hearing this, it at once enters the chief officer's head that 'those might be distress signals.'<sup>229</sup> 'What made you think they might be distress signals?' he is asked in London. 'Because they were rockets ... they were white rockets' is his answer.<sup>230</sup> When Stewart wakes the captain at 4.30am, Stewart immediately tells him, anxiously perhaps, 'the second mate told me he had seen rockets in the middle watch.'<sup>231</sup> The captain is unworried and unsurprised. 'O, yes, I know' he says. 'He has been telling me.'<sup>232</sup> No quibbling about the word 'rockets', no exclamation, 'Rockets? That's strange. He only mentioned weird lights and flares!' Then, when Lord arrives on the bridge in the pre-dawn and sees the ship to the south, he says 'she looks *all right*. She is not making any signals now.'<sup>233</sup> Why say this, unless the mention of rockets had put into his head the idea that she might *not* be 'all right'? And again, about an hour later, when Stewart wakes Evans, the wireless operator, he says 'There is a ship that has been firing rockets in the night. Please see if there is anything the matter'<sup>234</sup> ... see if you can find out what is wrong ... '<sup>235</sup> Again: *rockets*, suggesting something might be *the matter*, that something is *wrong*. The wireless operator puts on his headphones, and 'in five minutes [he] knew what was the matter.'<sup>236</sup> Evans, then Stewart, then Lord, then others, are stunned by the news, although at this stage no one

knows the extent of the loss of life. Stone is woken and told, and one sympathises with him as one might with a fatally wounded animal. He knows his life has changed forever. 'Yes, old chap, I saw rockets in my watch'<sup>237</sup> he says to his friend Groves, the third officer, who has raced into his cabin to talk *Titanic*. 'I saw rockets in my watch.'<sup>238</sup> 'All he said was he had seen rockets in his watch,'<sup>239</sup> Groves later recalls. It is a strange response – a non-sequitur par excellence – if, as Molony says, Stone *emphatically* did not think the rockets he had seen during the night indicated distress. But in any event, soon the whole ship is soon abuzz with news of the *Titanic* – and the rockets. Even before the *Californian* reached the scene of the disaster, 'it was being talked about a lot' – all 'the men on the ship talked about it.'<sup>240</sup> As news of the rockets spread, so did the news that 'the skipper was being called; called three times ... '<sup>241</sup>

Throughout the perplexing middle watch, then, and during the frantic minutes and hours after the news reached the *Californian*, all talk was of rockets – not flares, lights or shooting stars, but rockets. And in Gibson's mind the rockets meant 'distress,' in Stone's 'trouble', in Stewart's, that something was 'the matter' or 'wrong' or in 'distress' and even in the mind of Lord himself, that everything may not be 'all right.' Not one person at this stage thought that the rockets were tokens of farewell, or signals of celebration, or attempts to find a way through the ice, or any of the multitude of reasons proposed in subsequent decades by the Lordites in defence of their man.

Neither Lord nor Stone could have been entirely free from worry and doubt during the journey south to the *Carpathia* that morning, but once on the spot, the drama and their anxiety must have been lifted to a new level as they watched the *Carpathia's* officer semaphoring from only a few hundred yards away. Lord asked his own man to signal the message, 'What is the matter?' An innocuous enough question, but the response was anything but. James Bisset, on the *Carpathia*, semaphored: '*Titanic* hit berg here with loss of fifteen hundred lives ... '<sup>242</sup> It was shocking and appalling news. One wonders at the effect it must have had on Lord and Stone, as they stood silently surveying the scene: the semaphore flags fluttering and dancing in the freshening breeze, their colours and shapes catching the morning sun; the water reflecting the deep blue of the cloudless sky and lapping gently the hulls of the stopped ships. Lord may have been thinking just how deceptive and pitiless that sea could be, as he adjusted his captain's cap, lowering its brim to shield his eyes from bright glare of the sun, the polarised white light of the ice, and, perhaps, the accusing gaze of the men



around him. Because by then, we know, his ship was filled with talk of the unanswered rockets.

It is this scene which should be borne in mind when considering the evidence of Lord and Stone. Overnight they had become men who were compelled to do all they could to escape the crushing, debilitating weight of responsibility for so many deaths; at every turn they must push away the *Titanic* and her incriminating rockets. Whatever happened, whatever questions they were asked by senators and barristers, whatever others said, or did, or wrote, the rockets Stone saw, and told Lord about, must not be the rockets of the *Titanic*. The alternative was simply unthinkable.

No wonder, then, that when he had had time to think things through, Stone decided that the ship he watched had moved. Her bearing changed from south-south-east to south-west,<sup>243</sup> he said, and since his own ship was stopped, the changing bearing meant the other must have moved. If all it took to avoid responsibility for the *Titanic* dead was to move the rocket-firing ship through a compass point or two, then why wouldn't he do so? The idea of movement rose rapidly from a possibility to certainty, and was clung to doggedly by Stone, and then by Lord, and then by the Lordites. Molony unquestioningly accepts Stone's evidence that the ship moved, incorporating it into his chapter headings – 'A Steamer Steaming'<sup>244</sup> – and even suggesting that the ship's *movement*, not the rockets, was the focus of Stone's reports to Lord.<sup>245</sup> We know that this was not the case: it was most definitely *not* movement which caused Stone's anxiety and prompted his calls to the captain, it was the rockets. His first report makes no mention of movement at all,<sup>246</sup> and his second report, made via Gibson, says that the rocket firing ship 'was *disappearing* in the southwest.'<sup>247</sup> Rather like Boxhall's 'moving ship' evidence, on closer analysis the movement described by Stone amounts to very little. The initial bearing of south-south-east is mentioned only once<sup>248</sup> – the remainder of Stone's bearings all lie in the southwest: southwest, then southwest by west, then southwest by a half west, and then southwest again.<sup>249</sup> These are not substantial changes in bearing by any means. The interesting point is that Stone says the ship he watched was steaming away *toward* the southwest<sup>250</sup> – and a ship which is *bearing* southwest and which also steams away *toward* the southwest would in fact not change her bearing at all. When one reads the evidence as a whole, one gets the sense that Stone's bearings were general impressions – not precise observations – often judged by reference to his own ship's swinging head – which itself ended up pointing toward the southwest. 'And she goes away to the southwest?' he is asked in London. 'Yes – *as near as I*

*could judge. That was approximate.*'<sup>251</sup> It should be noted, too, that nowhere is Stone's evidence of a moving ship corroborated by his fellow watcher, Gibson. Gibson only ever says that he was told that she was 'slowly steering away toward the southwest',<sup>252</sup> not that her bearing was changing, and Gibson's own evidence suggests that the other ship lingered in the southwest for a long time before she 'disappeared'. Because she disappeared, Stone naturally assumed she had steamed away. 'A steamer that is in distress does not steam away from you, my Lord,'<sup>253</sup> he said at the British Inquiry. True, but a steamer in distress might very well sit quietly in the southwest, desperately firing rockets, until it 'disappears.'

No wonder, too, that when Stone reflected on what the ship looked like, he became certain that she was a 'small tramp steamer.'<sup>254</sup> In this impression he does have some corroboration. Gibson thought her a 'tramp steamer,'<sup>255</sup> or at least 'medium sized,'<sup>256</sup> and Lord himself thought, when he saw the ship just after she had stopped, that she was a 'medium sized steamer.'<sup>257</sup> He says, 'a ship like the "Titanic" at sea is an utter impossibility for anyone to mistake,'<sup>258</sup> and because Lord has said it, for the Lordites it must be so. But, at sea, at night, impressions can be misleading. Something which appears large and distant may turn out to be small and close. And vice versa. Recall Lord's final words in Washington – 'it was a very deceiving night'<sup>259</sup> – and it was deceiving because it was spectacularly clear, calm and black. In such conditions, where even the horizon is not available to help judge distance, a large liner at ten miles might well seem like a medium-sized steamer at five. Further, there is good evidence that after the *Titanic*'s failed attempt to 'port about the berg'<sup>260</sup> she came to a stop heading north, thus presenting her darkest, narrowest side to any ship to the north of her.<sup>261</sup> She may have appeared small and dimly lit, except, perhaps, for the 'glare of light on her after deck.' And, finally, there is a key witness who said the distant ship did indeed look like a passenger liner. Groves, the third officer, on duty in the hours leading up to midnight, watched carefully as the ship approached fast from the southeast. She had 'a lot of light', and 'there was absolutely no doubt her being a passenger steamer.'<sup>262</sup> But when the ship stopped at 11.40pm, 'her lights seemed to go out.'<sup>263</sup> When Lord came up on the bridge just before midnight, it is clear that it was this absence of light that caused him to think that she was not a passenger steamer.<sup>264</sup> Groves insisted to his captain that she *was* a passenger liner – it's just that her lights were out. And we, knowing that the *Titanic* hit her iceberg at 11.40pm, and that she swung her head to the north after the collision and then stopped, are better placed than

Groves to explain that sudden lack of light. The ship was no longer showing her brightly lit broadside to the north, but her dark and narrow bow. It is a coherent and persuasive explanation. But this does not stop Molony giving Groves 'the treatment', saying that his evidence is 'desperate,'<sup>265</sup> 'clumsily-worded,' 'pitiful,' 'garbled,' 'hopelessly confused,' and a 'flourish of outright floundering.'<sup>266</sup> In fact it is none of these things, and Molony's attacks do nothing to lessen the probative force of Groves' description of a passenger ship with a 'lot of light' speeding through the night and suddenly stopping.

And no wonder that, when Stone reflected still further on the night's events, it occurred to him the rockets he saw 'did not appear to go high enough'<sup>267</sup> and that they may not even have come from the ship he was watching, 'but from a greater distance past the ship.'<sup>268</sup> Butler Aspinall, KC, is perplexed. He suspects Stone is making up defences as he goes along. 'Has anyone ever suggested that these rockets possibly came from another ship, except you today in the witness box?'<sup>269</sup> Stone's reply should not, perhaps, surprise us. 'Yes,' he says, 'the captain and I had a talk over about it.'<sup>270</sup> It doesn't take long for Stone to appreciate the logical difficulty with this theory of his and the captain's, however. 'But I could not understand why, if the rockets came from a steamer beyond this one, when the steamer altered her bearing the rockets should also alter their bearings.'<sup>271</sup> Well, precisely. Even Stone understands that to have *two* steamers firing rockets alternately over a period of hours, all the while remaining perfectly in line, on the same bearing, is in the highest degree unlikely. In the end, he agrees he is 'almost certain'<sup>272</sup> that the rockets he saw came from the nearby steamer. How do we explain such exasperating confusion and uncertainty in his evidence? Most likely Stone did see low-lying rockets, which seemed to come from a point beyond where the puzzling steamer *had been* before she disappeared. These rockets were most likely the rockets described by Gibson as being 'right on the horizon,'<sup>273</sup> which came toward the end of the watch, and which we know were the rockets of the *Carpathia*, speeding to the rescue from the southeast.

And no wonder, finally, that when Lord himself talked things through with Stone that morning, as we know he did,<sup>274</sup> after the semaphore flags had conveyed their fateful message, he emphasised and developed all those points which might suggest the nearby ship was not the *Titanic*, and downplayed anything which might suggest she was. He also added some of his own ideas: he insisted that when he was first called, he was told of only one rocket.<sup>275</sup> This first report by Stone is critical, of course, because if Lord had acted upon it the *Californian* may well have reached the *Titanic* in time. It is therefore essential

for Lord to minimise its urgency and significance, which is why he is adamant it mentioned only one rocket. He emphasised too that the rockets were not *heard*<sup>276</sup> and therefore could not be distress signals. In time, this would become a central part of his defence. '[Stone] heard no signals' he said in an interview with Harrison in 1961, 'which he would have done if they'd been seven to ten miles off ... he would have heard them – [but] never a mention of them.'<sup>277</sup> Molony thinks this is conclusive,<sup>278</sup> and suggests too that the *Californian* observers should have heard the explosions of the *Titanic*'s boilers and the 'cries of the drowning'<sup>279</sup> if it was indeed the *Titanic* they were looking at. The simple answer to these assertions is that there are good scientific reasons why such sounds would *not* be heard at the distance of 7-10 miles. Reade reviews this evidence in detail,<sup>280</sup> a discussion which Molony simply ignores. The principles involved are not difficult: sound decays as the square of the distance – so sound at 10 miles from the source has an intensity only 1% of that at 1 mile, for instance – but much depends on the atmospheric conditions. Descending cold air, or refraction of sound away from the water surface, can cause greater rates of decay. Reade quotes Mr Little, a foremost expert on the subject: 'I would consider [socket distress signals] to have a range of 3-5 miles.'<sup>281</sup> It should be remembered, too, that sound takes about a minute to travel 10 miles, so to Stone and Gibson observing from such a distance, the rockets would seem to have exploded *absolutely silently*. If any sound reached them at all, and it is unlikely, it would have been a minute later and of such low intensity as to be easily lost amid other shipboard sounds.

These and other points Lord worked through, and thought about, and by the time he gave his evidence in Washington, most of the elements of his defence were already in place. They would be refined and developed over time by Lord and his defenders, but the essentials were there. When he boarded the train in Boston the story of the rockets was in the papers, thanks to the *Californian*'s carpenter and assistant donkeyman,<sup>282</sup> and during his train trip down to Washington Lord most likely would have ensured his map and his navigational information were carefully prepared; and satisfied himself that he was told of only one rocket; and developed the idea that the rockets seen weren't distress rockets, but more like 'flashes' and 'shooting stars'; and reminded himself that in any event the ship seen had been steaming away. But most importantly of all, he would have said to himself, the ship he saw with his own eyes was most definitely not the *Titanic*. There was 'no doubt about it.'<sup>283</sup> When, in Washington, Senator Smith almost as an afterthought asked him, 'did you see any

distress signals on Sunday night?’<sup>284</sup> Lord was ready. ‘You had better let me tell you that story,’<sup>285</sup> he says, and off he goes.

All of this is perfectly understandable, given what was at stake, but what is less so is the enthusiasm with which the Lordites adopt without question *all* of these defensive strategies, amplify and develop them, and then add more of their own. This is puzzling because the Lordites do not have Lord’s driving motive – they do not stand accused of neglecting the distress signals of thousands of people – and yet they assert Lord’s innocence with more verve than even the man himself seemed to do. Events are analysed as if each were timed with a stopwatch and detailed calculations are then undertaken. Harrison, for instance, by considering passenger estimates of lifeboat lowering times, by interrelating these in complex ways with timings of wireless signals received by other ships and Cape Race, all of which were in different time zones, and by considering the putting back of clocks and watches at midnight by some crew but not others, reaches the conclusion that the series of eight rockets fired by the *Titanic* commenced twenty minutes earlier than the series of rockets seen by the *Californian*. They therefore cannot be the same rockets. Molony’s calculations are similarly detailed and complex. At one point he assigns a precise firing time to *each rocket*: ‘1) 12.45; 2) 12.49;’ and so on.<sup>286</sup> He notes inconsistencies in the evidence of Gibson and Stone as to the frequency of firing<sup>287</sup> and elsewhere finds inconsistencies in the evidence about the exact number of rockets fired.<sup>288</sup>

This type of analysis abounds in Lordite literature, and rather than accept that inconsistencies in evidence of navigation, times, numbers, visual impressions, bearings, colours and so on are inevitable in an event with so many witnesses and so many variables, the Lordites go to great lengths to develop theories which do not require the *Titanic* to be within sight of the *Californian*. If the *Titanic*’s eight rockets, for instance, are twenty minutes too early, then Harrison sees no difficulty in proposing that there must have been *another ship* which fired a sequence of eight rockets twenty minutes later, and it must have been *this ship* which the *Californian* saw: a ship which approached from the east, like the *Titanic* did; stopped at 11.40pm in the south, as the *Titanic* did; looked odd and queer, as the *Titanic* did; fired rockets, as the *Titanic* did; disappeared at 2.20am, as the *Titanic* did; and in the pre-dawn was replaced by another rocket firing steamer, as the *Titanic* was. This mystery ship, according to the theory, was *between* the *Titanic* and the *Californian*, and yet there is not one witness among the hundreds of *Titanic* survivors who saw this mystery ship’s rockets. Harrison, and others, are perfectly happy to propound

theories such as these, extraordinary as they are. Foweraker developed his ‘four ship theory’ as early as 1912, a theory which requires the rocket-firing *Titanic* in the south watching *her* mystery ship, ‘Z’, and the *Californian* in the north watching the rockets of her own mystery ship, ‘X’.<sup>289</sup>

Molony contributes his own multi-ship theory, and it is the most extraordinary of all. He develops a hypothesis to fit the evidence of Stone that the nearby ship, although firing rockets, was not in distress: ‘It still does not seem to him that the nearby steamer was in distress,’ Molony writes, ‘but if not in distress, was communicating with another ship. But it may be that the other party to such communication was not in distress either ... So, possibly, a yet different ship, not the nearby vessel and not her unseen partner, was in distress.’<sup>290</sup> This may be a little baffling for those not schooled in Lordite ways, but let us take the time to think it through. There are several ships:

- (1) A ship not in distress, firing rockets containing messages not intended<sup>291</sup> for the *Californian*, seen by the *Californian*, but not seen by the *Titanic*.
- (2) Another ship – ‘the unseen partner’ – the intended recipient of the rocket messages, also not in distress, but not seen by the *Californian*;
- (3) Another ship – the ‘yet different ship’ – in distress, possibly firing rockets;
- (4) The *Titanic*, somewhere in the vicinity, in distress, firing rockets, but seeing none of the rockets of ships (1), (2), or (3), and most definitely not seeing the ship (5);
- (5) The *Californian*, not in distress, not firing any rockets, but watching carefully.

The point in (4) is highly significant although it is not often made: the hundreds of people on the decks of the sinking *Titanic*, with their vigilant and eager eyes, may have seen a codbanker, or a schooner, or a sailing vessel, or even a vessel that moved, but *not one single one of them* ever saw a ship that fired rockets. Apart from their own, of course.

But this is of no concern to Molony. He paints a picture of a complicated, perplexing and confusing night on the North Atlantic. The complexity only increases when he further develops his theory later in the book: ships fire rockets ‘at’ each other; there is a ‘literal coincidence’ of multiple rocket-firing ships remaining on the same bearing from the *Californian*<sup>292</sup> – an idea that even Stone rejected – and firing their rockets at ‘roughly the same period’.<sup>293</sup>

The interesting thing about Molony's theory is that its purpose is unclear. What is he seeking to explain by it? The chief purpose of earlier multi-ship theories was to enable the *Californian* to see a rocket-firing steamer which was not the *Titanic*, thus excusing Lord at least of not going to the aid of that particular steamer – a steamer upon which 1500 died. Molony's theory, however, does not seem to have such a purpose. Its aim, it seems, is merely to explain the Lord/Stone impression that there was a rocket firing steamer which was *nearby* and *small*. This is a modest aim – because, as we have seen, this can be explained without resorting to astonishingly complex and improbable theories of multiple rocket-firing ships – but Molony does not appear to want to go so far as to claim that the *Titanic* was not seen. He says: 'If another ship was firing distress rockets, how would Stone know it was the *Titanic*? But it might have been ...'<sup>294</sup> It might have been? It seems that Molony is prepared to concede that Stone and Gibson saw the rockets of the *Titanic*, provided it is accepted that there were other non-*Titanic* steamers also firing rockets.

But later in the text, even this proviso seems to fall away. Molony appears simply to accept the point: 'It is not disputed,' he says, 'that the *Californian* saw the *Titanic*'s distress rockets.'<sup>295</sup> Isn't it? He also says 'They certainly did see them, although admittedly very low-lying ...'<sup>296</sup> Did they? And, most clearly of all, this:

Lord Mersey, in his final report, wrote that the *Californian* saw eight rockets. She actually saw eleven. It is granted that the first eight seen were from the *Titanic*. But the last three of the eleven were almost certainly those fired by the Cunard Line's *Carpathia* ...<sup>297</sup>

Molony makes this statement only as a prelude to his criticism of Lord Mersey's errors, but isn't this the crux of the whole affair? These concessions come late in the book, are unexpected and puzzling, and render the purpose of his book unclear. Does Molony agree then, when all is said and done, that the *Californian* saw the *Titanic*'s rockets and did nothing? Is his primary purpose simply to argue that the *Titanic* did not see the *Californian*? Or perhaps simply that Stone did not properly report the rockets to Lord, so it is not Lord's fault?

Leslie Harrison, certainly, would not be happy with such modest ambitions.

Leslie Reade's opinion is that '[the] evidence against Lord was overwhelming. That concerning the most important issue, the rockets, was so damning that his supporters were plainly intimidated and preferred to make loud

noises on little puzzles of relative unimportance.'<sup>298</sup> The evidence is overwhelming, and in the end, even Molony abandons his minute calculations and sifting of evidence in favour of the only possible conclusion, brutal as it may be: Stone and Gibson saw the *Titanic*'s rockets, they reported them to the captain, and he stayed in the chartroom.

### 13. The predicament of Lord and Stone



When one sits back and reads the evidence as whole, Stone's and Lord's contradictions and evasions create an impression of men with something to hide, of men guarding a terrible and damning secret. At times it seems that even they do not really believe what they are saying (using *rockets* to answer *Morse*?); that even they must know that dead-reckoned ship positions, impressions of ship movement or ship size or funnel colour, or problems with rocket timings, heights or sounds, cannot outweigh the overwhelming correspondence between what was seen from the *Californian*, and what the *Titanic* and *Carpathia* did.

Each man runs his defences as best he can, but in the end it becomes clear that each has only one defence with any real plausibility or power. It is, perhaps, the defence most difficult to raise, and it is a defence by no means in keeping with the finest traditions of British seagoing, but in the extraordinary circumstances in which each man found himself he had no option but to use it.

Each man must try to blame the other.

Stone *told the captain about what he saw*. That is his only real defence, and in London he summed it up succinctly and repeatedly. 'I informed the Master and left him to judge.'<sup>299</sup> Even if he, Stone, thought they were distress rockets, it was not his position to make that decision, or to wake the wireless officer, or to steam toward the rockets. His job was simply to relate the *facts* to the captain, which he did. He becomes almost indignant about it. Why wake the captain to tell him about the

rockets? 'Because it was my duty to do so, and it was his duty to listen to it,' he says.<sup>300</sup> Why, in the end, did he think the ship was not in distress? 'It did not occur to me because if there had been any grounds for supposing the ship would have been in distress the captain would have expressed it to me.'<sup>301</sup> The captain did not express it. Instead, he asked, 'Are they company's signals?'<sup>302</sup> and Stone tells the captain he doesn't know, that they are just white rockets.<sup>303</sup> If ever he did think the ship was in 'trouble', or even in 'distress', he is put off the scent by the captain's question about company's signals. And that is that.

Similarly, Lord's only real defence is that *he relied on Stone*. Stone was the responsible officer on the bridge – he was 'the man in charge of the watch'<sup>304</sup> – and it was up to him to make a decision about whether the rockets were distress rockets. 'I had a responsible officer on the bridge,'<sup>305</sup> he told the British Inquiry. More revealing, however, are his letters, written after he had been condemned by both inquiries. 'I didn't think it possible for any seaman to mistake a company's signal for a distress signal,' he wrote to the Board of Trade, '*so I relied on the officer on watch ...*'<sup>306</sup> What follows can only be described as an extraordinary attempt to sheet the blame home to where he doubtless thought it belonged: 'If you consider there was any laxity aboard the *Californian* the night in question, I respectfully draw your attention to the information given here, which was given in evidence, which also proves was *not on my part ...* I fail to see why I should have to put up with all the public odium, through no fault or neglect *on my part ...*'<sup>307</sup> In his letter to his Member of Parliament, Mr Gill, he refers to 'a certain amount of "slackness" aboard the "*Californian*" the night in question'<sup>308</sup> and although we can never know what 'slackness' he is referring to, we can guess that he has in mind primarily his second officer on the bridge. And it comes as no surprise that Harrison, too, is not reluctant to point the finger of blame toward the bridge, if that is what is required to save his man: 'If the Board of Trade subsequently sought to blame anyone for the *Californian's* alleged failure to respond to what might have been distress signals, then surely any such blame should have been attached to the man certified by them as competent to carry out the duties of a first mate [that is, Stone].'<sup>309</sup>

Yet, in Molony's view of things, Lord is a man who 'is loyal to those serving with him, and does not insist that any are wrong or mistaken, being content simply to state his own case ...'<sup>310</sup>

In this neat symmetry the tragedy lies: Stone, on the cold bridge above, carefully watching the rockets, thinking

that if there is a problem the captain will come up; Lord, dozing in the warm chartroom below, thinking that if there is a problem the second officer will come down. Responsibility for action falls like a snowflake from the sky, landing gently between them, touching neither. And all the while the chartroom clock ticks away the minutes, and then the hours.

But in the end, of course, blame must fall on them both, although the question of who is *most* culpable is an interesting subject for informed discussion. What is clear, however, is that it is absolutely misleading of Lord, and his defenders, to ascribe to Stone an active, positive decision that the rockets were *not* distress rockets. Harrison says 'it is manifestly unfair to blame Captain Lord for his inactivity after receiving purely negative reports from [Stone].'<sup>311</sup> In Washington, Lord said Stone 'said they were not distress signals,'<sup>312</sup> and again in London: 'The second officer, the man in charge of the watch, said most emphatically that they were not distress rockets ...'<sup>313</sup> '[If] they had been distress rockets he would most certainly have come down and called me himself but he was not a little bit worried about it at all.'<sup>314</sup> Lord does not say when this emphatic decision was made, but if it was made at all, it was made after Stone had knowledge that 1500 had died. It certainly was not made at the time. Lord implies, however, that it was made *and communicated to him* at the time, which why he did not go the bridge, or wake the wireless man. Lord makes it clear half a century later: 'All the trouble is; why did the Captain of the *Californian* not come on deck and look at those lights? For the simple reason a responsible officer was on the bridge who told him they were not distress rockets ... he was not in any doubt. He was quite satisfied that they were not distress signals ...'<sup>315</sup>

Of course, the evidence persuasively demonstrates the opposite: at the time the rockets were being fired, Stone did not decide, or say, that the rockets were not distress rockets. His mind was uneasy, we will recall. He knew the rockets weren't being sent up for fun; he thought the ship might be in trouble; he knew that rockets sent up at regular intervals meant distress. This is not a man deciding the rockets were not distress signals – it is very close to the opposite – but in any event, Stone 'informed the Master and left it for him to judge.'<sup>316</sup>

But even on Lord's own evidence, Stone's reports did *not* satisfy him that the rockets were not distress rockets. In London, Lord explains to the Attorney General that there was a possibility the rockets were company's signals, which 'resemble rockets; they do not shoot as high and they do not explode.'<sup>317</sup> He asked Stone whether it was a company's signal; Stone said he did not know. They were

just white rockets.<sup>318</sup> 'Very well,' asks the Attorney General, 'that did not satisfy you?'

'It did not satisfy me,' is Lord's response.

'Then if it was not that, it might have been a distress signal.'

'It might have been.'

'And you remained in the chartroom.'

'I remained in the chartroom.'<sup>319</sup>

This is most decidedly *not* Stone reassuring Lord that there was no distress signal; it is Lord being uncertain about whether it was a distress signal, and doing absolutely nothing himself to verify it one way or the other.

Lord was not in bed. He was in the chartroom resting on the settee. The bridge was only a few steps away. He should have got up and looked for himself. And buried deep inside one of his letters is his own acknowledgement of this: 'It is a matter of great regret to me that I did not go on deck myself at this time ...'<sup>320</sup>

The wireless operator, too, was only a short distance away. If Lord is 'not satisfied', why not wake him? Molony says, '[t]his common question is, sadly, easily disposed of.' Really? Isn't it the most pressing question of all? If Lord, or Stone, had woken Evans, then all the confusing mysteries of the night would have been solved in an instant. 'Lord in his own mind had no reason at all to wake the wireless operator,' says Molony. *No reason at all?* White rockets being fired? Amidst ice and icebergs? In the middle of the night? Rockets which 'might have been distress signals'?

## 14. To thine own self be true

Lord's defenders say that Lord did nothing wrong that night, or afterwards. There was nothing he did, or did not do, which could not be justified on the grounds of common sense or good seamanship. His words and actions – on the Atlantic that night, and in the days that followed, and in Boston, and during the Senate hearings in Washington, and in the inquiry in London – alone among all the words and actions in this great drama are unimpeachable. It is a standard that even Lord does not claim for himself – his 'great regret' suggests an acknowledgment of at least some share in the 'slackness' which he says existed on board that night – yet his supporters concede not one inch. Harrison says Lord 'was a man of absolute integrity' with 'unique strength of character.'<sup>321</sup> And again: 'One can only marvel at [his]

strength of character.'<sup>322</sup> For Molony, too, Lord is a man 'who is in fact honest'<sup>323</sup> and 'entirely blame-free,'<sup>324</sup> who has 'no possible motive to lie' and is not 'defence-minded.'<sup>325</sup> Such energetic praise of Lord is brought into stark relief by the equally energetic attacks on truthfulness, motives and character of Mersey, Knapp, Bisset, Groves, Gibson, Stone, Ernest Gill, and others. For the Lordites, it is Lord's reputation which must be preserved, no matter what the cost, and only Lord's.

Such praise of Lord is most likely valid and justified in almost every circumstance and almost all of the time. But the circumstances in which Lord found himself in the early hours of 15 April 1912 were anything but ordinary; and it is his actions in the face of these very specific and unusual events by which he will inevitably be judged.

It should be remembered that Lord volunteered no report of the rockets – or indeed, any report at all – to his employers, the Leyland Line, who were surprised to learn from the press that their ship was anywhere near the *Titanic*. Rumours had spread on both sides of the Atlantic that the *Californian* had recovered bodies,<sup>326</sup> and Lord received a message from Leyland: 'Press reports you were near *Titanic* and have remains on board. Have you anything to report?'<sup>327</sup> Lord's reply tells of arriving six hours after the *Titanic* had sunk, and of finding no bodies. He does not mention, of course, the rockets.<sup>328</sup> Lord must have been anxious, because he asked Stone and Gibson to set out in letters to him what exactly happened during the watch. Their description of the rockets was worrying reading, notwithstanding references to tramp steamers and changing bearings, and Lord kept them secret. He did not show them to others on board, and he certainly did not reveal their existence to either the British or American inquiry, despite their obvious probative value as contemporaneous records of what was seen. The letters were not generally published or known until nearly 50 years later.<sup>329</sup>

Apart from these secret letters, there was not one single written word anywhere on the *Californian* to link her with rockets or the *Titanic*. Would the sighting of white rockets be the sort of thing usually recorded in the ship's log book? 'Yes,'<sup>330</sup> said the chief officer, responsible for maintaining this document, and 'most decidedly – that is what the log book is for' said Groves, the third officer. But neither the *Californian's* scrap log nor her official log made a single mention of them.

But it is in Boston that Lord most clearly demonstrated that he had something to hide. Rumours persisted that the *Californian* had recovered *Titanic* bodies, and so on arrival the press rushed aboard. What did Lord say? The subsequent newspaper reports reveal that he told of

receiving the SOS message in the morning and racing through the ice to the scene of the wreckage, but arriving too late to do anything.<sup>331</sup> It was a straightforward, if heartbreaking, story, although Lord was strangely coy about his ship's position, which he said was a 'state secret.'<sup>332</sup> No mention of the rockets, of course, but what Lord did not know was that at least two of his crew were seething with indignation: MacGregor, the carpenter and Gill, the assistant donkeyman. These men, independently of each other, took steps to tell the story of the rockets to the press. As the story began to spread, Lord was forced to adopt a more direct approach. 'The wireless operator retired about 11 o'clock, and up to the moment of shutting down no message of distress or any signal of distress was received or sighted.'<sup>333</sup> Strictly, this is true, but it is nonetheless wholly misleading in what it leaves out. With the publication in the *Boston American*<sup>334</sup> of Gill's story of rockets seen and rockets ignored, Lord's denials become more emphatic. 'Mr Stewart, the first officer, was on the bridge during the times that the signals were supposed to have been seen,' Lord told *The Boston Journal*,<sup>335</sup> 'and he can tell you himself that nothing of the kind was seen by him or any of the men who were on watch with him.' This, of course, is a lie. The man on the bridge was Stone, and Lord knew it. 'Everything had been quiet during the night and no signals of distress or anything else had been seen ...' continues Lord, the man whom Harrison tells us is 'transparently honest' and displays a 'rigid adherence to the truth.'<sup>336</sup>

Stewart was not the only man called in aid to support Lord's story: 'Stone emphatically denied that he had notified Capt. Lord of any rockets,' reported the *Boston Herald*,<sup>337</sup> 'as he had seen none, nor had any been reported to him. He also denies that he signed any statement, under compulsion by the captain, stating that he had seen any signals of distress.'

There are other examples, but the above are sufficient to support Leslie Reade's assertion that Lord's intentional falsehoods in Boston were 'a permanent and unanswerable exposure of his own consciousness of guilt.'<sup>338</sup> According to Reade, it is in Boston that Lord crosses his own personal Rubicon:

The impression left by his final story in *The Boston Journal*, above all, is so damning that it is hard to think of any convincing answer Lord could have given to an accusation of plain falsehood, short of being able to claim that he had been grossly and most damagingly misquoted. Yet, never from first to last, is he known to have made the slightest complaint of that kind.<sup>339</sup>

The most extraordinary thing of all is that, although Lord never made such a complaint, Molony does on his behalf. He suggests that the *Boston Journal* 'may have felt it could put all manner of words in Captain Lord's mouth,' although he never says what the paper could hope to achieve by such a perverse course. 'Why would Lord lie,' asks Molony incredulously, 'in such crass, contradictory terms to only one newspaper?'<sup>340</sup> Lord lied to several papers, but no matter – Molony concludes that the 'fairest assessment of Lord's press statements in Boston is that they were defensive and deflectionary. He was warding off controversy. And this at least is a perfectly understandable human reaction.'<sup>341</sup> 'Defensive?' 'Deflectionary?' 'Perfectly understandable?' One can only imagine what would have been Molony's opinion if such falsehoods were to be found in the mouths of Groves, or Bisset, or Mersey, or Knapp. It is worth recalling the epithets which were visited upon the heads of these men: 'idiocy,' 'claptrap,' 'nonsense,' a 'concoction,' 'prefabricated,' 'altogether fraudulent,' 'glaringly prejudicial,' 'stupid,' 'imbecilic,' 'villainous,' 'garbled,' 'littered with factual mistakes,' and more.

What *is*, perhaps, a 'perfectly understandable human reaction' is for a man to lie, if that is what he thinks it takes to avoid being blamed for the deaths of 1500 people. No one alleges that Lord was a habitual or practiced liar. No doubt he was hitherto an honest man. But in Boston he found himself in circumstances so unprecedented and extreme that he saw no option other than to lie – in crass and contradictory terms, and to more than one newspaper.

None of this is to criticise Stanley Lord for the sake of it. He was only 34 years old. He was not a bad man. He was not a drunk and he was not lazy. He did not lack courage. He had safely landed over a thousand troops onto the open beaches of the Essex coast<sup>342</sup> and no doubt there are other examples of his seamanship and professionalism. He was 'wholly dedicated to his profession as shipmaster.'<sup>343</sup> In short, he did not deserve to be in the position in which he found himself.

Let us remember that his ship was safe. He had been cautious. 'I was looking after my own ship,'<sup>344</sup> he told the British Inquiry, and repeated to the Board of Trade: 'I had taken every precaution for the safety of my own ship ...'<sup>345</sup> His ship was stopped. The unexpected encounter with the ice had given him a chance to get some much needed rest. He lay down on the settee in the chartroom, and he fell asleep. What harm could come?

No doubt, if a storm or hurricane had threatened his ship, Lord would have been on the bridge at once, staring down the gale, doing what he could to keep his ship and men

safe. There is no doubt either that if it had been his own ship that had hit an iceberg, he would have calmly and professionally supervised the evacuation, and been the last one to leave. Captain Lord did not lack a sense of duty, and he was no coward.

But hurricanes and icebergs were not what fate had in store for Stanley Lord. His test was more subtle; it came upon him slowly and quietly, during the calmest night anyone had seen on the North Atlantic. It was a cruel trick, having him told tentatively of white rockets, while he was half asleep; and it was a crueller trick still, having those rockets come from the largest, safest ship in the world, nearby and slowly sinking. For we mustn't forget that, whatever strange thoughts were in the minds of Lord and Stone that night, they could not have had the faintest inkling of the staggering enormity of the tragedy unfolding only a few miles away.

If Lord had known, he would have done everything humanly possible to help the thousands in peril. But he did not know, and the trick, once played, could not be undone. It could not be undone by Lord, in the half-century of his remaining life; nor could it be undone by the extraordinary, unrelenting efforts of his friend Harrison; nor, either, by Molony's 352 pages of minute calculations and vociferous denunciations.

When Lord stood on the bridge of his ship that morning, watching the *Carpathia's* fluttering semaphore flags, he must have known that he stood on the threshold of a new and very different life – a life inextricably and forever linked with the most extraordinary maritime disaster in history. He must have keenly felt the injustice of it all. His mistake, after all, was so small. But how to live with its horrendously disproportionate consequences? How to live with 1500 lives on his conscience?

In the end, Lord could not do so. The truth was simply a burden too heavy. He adopted instead a strategy of denial. He denied absolutely and repeatedly that it was the *Titanic's* rockets Stone saw and reported. He denied it to others, and to himself, and by the time he enlisted the aid of Leslie Harrison fifty years later, no doubt he had persuaded himself it was true. They needed a bloody goat; he was it; and that was that.

Lord did not pine away in shame, finding refuge in alcoholism and isolation; there is no evidence that he cried out for forgiveness on his deathbed, or that he was troubled at all. His son tells us that 'nothing could be further from the truth. He did not give a damn for anybody – what they thought – and possessed a certain magnetism of personality which made a lasting impression on people he encountered ...'<sup>346</sup> He did not

worry about the *Titanic* affair ... His conscience was quite clear ...'<sup>347</sup> He never spoke of the disaster. Ever. And if, while wandering in the Wallasey library, he ever inadvertently picked up a book about the *Titanic* disaster, he would put it straight down again.<sup>348</sup>

Perhaps he put *Titanic* books down because he knew all he needed to know about the disaster – that being, in short, that the *Californian* did not see the *Titanic's* rockets – but it may also have been that such books brought back memories, and troubled his conscience. One wonders whether, as he walked along the Wirral coast, looking out across the grey and gloomy Mersey estuary, it did not cross his mind, once or twice, that the ship seen from the *Californian* was indeed the *Titanic*. And if he thought that, did he think too of what may have happened if he had gone to the bridge himself that night? If he had woken the wireless operator? And did he then, in his mind's eye, using his experience and knowledge, plan the bringing of his ship alongside the sinking liner? Did he picture the transfer of passengers in boats, and think through his commands to Stewart, to Groves, to Stone even, as they worked? Did he then imagine the chatting in his ship's dining saloon of mothers, and husbands, and children?

He might, said Lord Mersey, 'have saved many if not all of the lives that were lost.'

One wonders, too, whether he imagined the rockets he never himself saw – the white rockets – perfectly white – clear and unmistakeable against the perfect blackness of the void.

Those rockets! Unanswered then, and unanswerable ever after.



# Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Molony, S, *Titanic and the Mystery Ship* (2006) (hereinafter referred to as 'Molony'), back cover.

<sup>2</sup> www.amazon.com

<sup>3</sup> Transcript of the British Inquiry (hereinafter referred to as 'BI', followed by the question number), question 7988 (Stone).

<sup>4</sup> BI7984 (Stone).

<sup>5</sup> 19 or 20 (transcript of US inquiry – hereinafter referred to as 'US' followed by the page number – p723); 30 (BI6822 (Lord); Lord, *Boston Advertiser*, 20 April 1912, cited in Reade, *The Ship That Stood Still* (1993), hereinafter referred to as 'Reade', p153); 32 (BI6823); 33 (Harrison, *A Titanic Myth* (1986) p47); 37 (Reade, p121, citing Harrison); 45 (Reade, p121, citing Harrison). See also Reade, p37 and p159.

<sup>6</sup> The original notebooks are available for viewing at the Merseyside Maritime Museum in Liverpool: Deposit D/LO, items 12/1-3.

<sup>7</sup> Foweraker, 'A Miscarriage of Justice – The Case of the S.S. 'Californian'', *The Nautical Magazine*, April 1913, p363; May 1913, p471; June 1913, p577.

<sup>8</sup> Harrison, L, *A Titanic Myth* (1986) p164. See also Harrison, L, *Defending Captain Lord – A Titanic Myth Part Two* (1996) p11 and Harrison, L, *Captain Lord's Plight to Remember* (pamphlet, 1997).

<sup>9</sup> See Harrison, L, *The Case for Captain Lord – An Echo of the Titanic Disaster* (1997).

<sup>10</sup> Lord, W, *The Night Lives On* (1986) p181. See, for instance, Padfield, P, *The Titanic and the Californian* (1965); Lynch, D, *Titanic – An Illustrated History* (1992), p190; Eaton, J & Haas, C, *Triumph and Tragedy – A Chronicle in Words and Pictures* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Lord, W, *The Night Lives On* (1986) (Chapter 14); Butler, *Unsinkable* (1998) (Chapter 10 and Appendix II); Marcus, *The Maiden Voyage* (1969); Davies, M, *The Titanic* (1986) p163 ('the balance of probability is still against Lord'). For more recent 'Anti-Lordite' commentary, see the websites of Dave Billnitzer ('Titanic and the Mystery Ship' - <http://home.earthlink.net/~dnitzer/Titanic.html>) and George Behe ('George Behe's Titanic Tidbits.' <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/Carpathia> pages 5,6,7,8.)

<sup>12</sup> Reade, L, *The Ship That Stood Still* (1993) (hereinafter referred to as 'Reade').

<sup>13</sup> Harrison referred to *The Ship That Stood Still* as 'the book we managed to kill before before it came out' in a 1962 Liverpool press conference: see Behe, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> See Harrison, *Defending Captain Lord – A Titanic Myth Part Two* (1996) p178.

<sup>15</sup> For an example of how acrimonious the debate can become, see Rob Kamps' article about Leslie Reade and Edward De Groot on Paul Lee's website: <http://www.paullee.com/titanic/articles>.

<sup>16</sup> Molony, p329.

<sup>17</sup> Molony, p39.

<sup>18</sup> Molony, p47.

<sup>19</sup> Reade, p33.

<sup>20</sup> See Reade's summary of the US evidence, p33 and p54-55.

<sup>21</sup> Although it is instructive to note the consistency about where the light was: on the *Titanic's* port bow. See Reade, p33.

<sup>22</sup> Harrison, 'The 'Californian' Incident,' *Merchant Navy Journal*, Jan 1962, p17.

<sup>23</sup> Harrison, First Petition (to the Board of Trade), February 1965, p6.

<sup>24</sup> Molony, Chapter 2, 'The Ship Not Seen By The Titanic'.

<sup>25</sup> Reade, p311.

<sup>26</sup> US p733 (Lord's final comment).

<sup>27</sup> BI7194 (Lord). See also BI8135 (Groves). Reade considers this point persuasive: 'The *Titanic* did not see the *Californian*, not because she was not there, but merely because the multitudinous stars acted as effect, although temporary, camouflage.' p312

<sup>28</sup> Reade, p32.

<sup>29</sup> Reade, p32-33.

<sup>30</sup> BI15401.

<sup>31</sup> US p235.

<sup>32</sup> Molony, p28.

<sup>33</sup> A ship's steaming lights are left on at sea, even if she is not 'steaming' but drifting.

<sup>34</sup> US p934.

<sup>35</sup> Reade, p55-8.

<sup>36</sup> Reade, 55.

<sup>37</sup> Reade, p57.

<sup>38</sup> BI14149 (Lightoller).

<sup>39</sup> Molony, p29.

<sup>40</sup> US, p295 (Pitman).

<sup>41</sup> Molony, p30.

- <sup>42</sup> US, p358 (Fleet).
- <sup>43</sup> US, p611 (Buley).
- <sup>44</sup> BI17997 (Crawford).
- <sup>45</sup> Reade, p55 (private interview).
- <sup>46</sup> Molony, p29.
- <sup>47</sup> Molony, p28.
- <sup>48</sup> Harrison, L, *A Titanic Myth* (1986) p188.
- <sup>49</sup> Molony, p47.
- <sup>50</sup> See, for instance, the Bilnitzer and Behe websites, op.cit.
- <sup>51</sup> Excluding, for the time being, others who may or may not have seen the distant ship: the donkeyman Ernest Gill, for instance.
- <sup>52</sup> BI7943 (Stone).
- <sup>53</sup> BI7944 (Stone); 7624 (Gibson).
- <sup>54</sup> BI7945 (Stone); BI7517 (Gibson).
- <sup>55</sup> BI7515; 7650 (Gibson).
- <sup>56</sup> BI7651 (Gibson).
- <sup>57</sup> BI7675 (Gibson).
- <sup>58</sup> BI7957 (Stone).
- <sup>59</sup> BI7895 (Stone).
- <sup>60</sup> BI7906 (Stone).
- <sup>61</sup> Lord Mersey, *Report on the Loss of the 'Titanic' (S.S.)*, 1912, p46.
- <sup>62</sup> Harrison, *A Titanic Myth* (1986), p218.
- <sup>63</sup> Molony, p328.
- <sup>64</sup> Molony, p259.
- <sup>65</sup> Molony, p257.
- <sup>66</sup> Harrison, *A Titanic Myth* (1986) p188.
- <sup>67</sup> Molony, p259.
- <sup>68</sup> Molony, p258.
- <sup>69</sup> Molony, p280.
- <sup>70</sup> Molony, p295.
- <sup>71</sup> Molony, p295.
- <sup>72</sup> Molony, p225.
- <sup>73</sup> Molony, p224.
- <sup>74</sup> Molony, p226.
- <sup>75</sup> BI8008(Stone); BI7591(Mersey/Gibson).
- <sup>76</sup> BI6807(Mersey).
- <sup>77</sup> BI8071-8085 (Mersey questions Stone).
- <sup>78</sup> Molony, p270, and generally Chapter 20, 'Captain's Contrasted.'
- <sup>79</sup> Molony, p280.
- <sup>80</sup> Molony, p272.
- <sup>81</sup> Molony, p275.
- <sup>82</sup> Molony, p275.
- <sup>83</sup> Subcommittee of the Committee on Commerce (United States Senate), *Report – Investigation into the Loss of SS 'Titanic'*, extracted in Kuntz, *The Titanic Disaster Hearings* (1998), p547.
- <sup>84</sup> See Reade, p359 (with Knapp's accompanying memorandum); Molony, p246; Harrison, *A Titanic Myth* (1986), p250.
- <sup>85</sup> Molony, p245.
- <sup>86</sup> Molony, p245.
- <sup>87</sup> Molony, p251.
- <sup>88</sup> Molony, p248.
- <sup>89</sup> Molony, p245.
- <sup>90</sup> Molony, p246.
- <sup>91</sup> Molony, p245.
- <sup>92</sup> Molony, p250.
- <sup>93</sup> Molony, p251.
- <sup>94</sup> Molony, p253.
- <sup>95</sup> Molony, p251.
- <sup>96</sup> Molony, p245.
- <sup>97</sup> Molony, p255.
- <sup>98</sup> See, for instance, Reade, Chapter 9 ('Where Was the Californian?') and Appendix E ('Maps of the icefield in which the *Titanic* sank.');
- See also Billnitzer's website, op.cit., 'Where was the Californian?', setting out the work of Roy Mengot:
- <http://home.earthlink.net/~dnitzer/updates/maps.html>
- <sup>99</sup> Molony, p305-6. See also Reade, p364-5; Titanic Historical Society, *Commutator*, September 1964; Foweraker, 'A Miscarriage of Justice – The Case of the S.S. 'Californian'', *The Nautical Magazine*, April 1913, p364. A version of the map exists in Foweraker's original notebooks at the Merseyside Maritime Museum: Deposit D/LO, items 12/1-3.
- <sup>100</sup> Molony, p306.
- <sup>101</sup> Molony, p306.
- <sup>102</sup> See, for instance, the evidence of Captain Moore: 'it extended as far as the eye could reach, north and south', but was only 5 to 6 miles in width.' US p765 (Moore).
- <sup>103</sup> BI7396 (Lord).
- <sup>104</sup> Molony, p265. See also p120, p274.
- <sup>105</sup> The evidence of Groves, for instance, suggests she arrived sooner – see Reade, Chapter 8.
- <sup>106</sup> Deviation is deflection of the compass needle caused by the ship's own magnetic field. This varies with the direction of the ship's head.
- <sup>107</sup> The difference between magnetic and true north, which varies with time and with position on the Earth's globe.
- <sup>108</sup> *American Practical Navigator* ('Bowditch') (1984 Edition) p469.
- <sup>109</sup> See US p715 (Lord); BI 6704(Lord); Affidavit of Captain Stanley Lord, 25 June 1959, extracted in Reade, p349.
- <sup>110</sup> Ballard, R D, *The Discovery of the Titanic* (1987), p199. The position quoted is the position of the boiler field, probably the best indication of the *Titanic's* break-up position on the surface.
- <sup>111</sup> Molony, Chapter 9 ('Location, location and location'). See particularly p99-100.

<sup>112</sup> Affidavit of Captain Stanley Lord, 25 June 1959, extracted in Reade, p348.

<sup>113</sup> *American Practical Navigator* ('Bowditch') (1984) p473.

<sup>114</sup> The positions gave a run since noon 'which was much ahead of Dead Reckoning...' Affidavit of Captain Stanley Lord, 25 June 1959, extracted in Reade, p348.

<sup>115</sup> Affidavit of Captain Stanley Lord, 25 June 1959, extracted in Reade, p349.

<sup>116</sup> Affidavit of Captain Stanley Lord, 25 June 1959, extracted in Reade, p348.

<sup>117</sup> Affidavit of Captain Stanley Lord, 25 June 1959, extracted in Reade, p349.

<sup>118</sup> *American Practical Navigator* ('Bowditch') (1984), p817, p819.

<sup>119</sup> BI8697. Molony later suggests that the current was northerly – pushing the *Californian* north, away from the *Titanic*.

<sup>120</sup> Molony, p95.

<sup>121</sup> Molony, p95.

<sup>122</sup> BI 8706 (Stewart).

<sup>123</sup> Molony, p95.

<sup>124</sup> See above. Captain Moore, too, is asked by Senator Smith whether he 'took' his position when arriving at the *Titanic's* SOS position, and replies, 'I could not. I could not take any position. There was nothing – I could not see' US p761.

<sup>125</sup> Affidavit of Captain Stanley Lord, 25 June 1959, extracted in Reade, p349.

<sup>126</sup> BI8808 (Stewart).

<sup>127</sup> Affidavit of Captain Stanley Lord, 25 June 1959, extracted in Reade, p349.

<sup>128</sup> BI8706 (Stewart). Molony makes much of this: Molony, p95.

<sup>129</sup> Molony, p320.

<sup>130</sup> Molony, p320.

<sup>131</sup> Molony, p215.

<sup>132</sup> Molony, p96.

<sup>133</sup> Molony, p85.

<sup>134</sup> Molony, p127.

<sup>135</sup> Molony, p95.

<sup>136</sup> Molony, p245.

<sup>137</sup> Molony's analysis of the timing of the rockets is an exemplar: see Molony, p128-129.

<sup>138</sup> Bisset, J, *Tramps and Ladies* (1959) p291.

<sup>139</sup> US p777.

<sup>140</sup> US p777.

<sup>141</sup> US p778.

<sup>142</sup> US p779.

<sup>143</sup> Molony, p206

<sup>144</sup> Molony, p208

<sup>145</sup> Molony, 210. Molony is here true to the memory of his predecessor, Mr Harrison, who labelled Bisset's book a 'tissue of nonsense' – see Reade, p306.

<sup>146</sup> As well as being knighted by the King, Bisset was appointed Commander of the Legion of Merit (USA).

<sup>147</sup> See Bisset, *Sail Ho!* (1958), back cover and page viii.

<sup>148</sup> Bisset, *Sail Ho!* (1958), back cover.

<sup>149</sup> Bisset, *Sail Ho!* (1958) pviii.

<sup>150</sup> Bisset, *Sail Ho!* (1958) pviii and ix.

<sup>151</sup> 'Inevitably I had to do most of the work,' says Harrison in relation to the affidavit: *A Titanic Myth – The Californian Incident* (1986), p185.

<sup>152</sup> US, p733 (Lord).

<sup>153</sup> Molony, p187.

<sup>154</sup> Archbold, R, *Ken Marschall's Art of Titanic* (1998), p107. This image is not cited as evidence of how the *Carpathia's* funnel actually looked that morning, but rather to show that an impression of funnel colour, in the early light of dawn, from a distance of ten or more miles, is hardly conclusive evidence that it was *not* the *Carpathia*.

<sup>155</sup> BI25551 (Rostron).

<sup>156</sup> Affidavit of Arthur Henry Rostron, subscribed and sworn at New York on 4 June 1912 before John Greenop, Acting British Vice Consul. (Item 11/1 of Deposit D/LO in the Merseyside Maritime Museum Archives).

<sup>157</sup> Molony, p209.

<sup>158</sup> See Reade, p305-310.

<sup>159</sup> See Harrison, L, *Defending Captain Lord – A Titanic Myth Part Two* (1996), p47-8; Reade, p308.

<sup>160</sup> Reade, p308.

<sup>161</sup> Reade, p308.

<sup>162</sup> Reade, p308.

<sup>163</sup> Reade, p317.

<sup>164</sup> Harrison, 'The Californian Incident', *Merchant Navy Journal*, Spring 1962, p16.

<sup>165</sup> See Reade, p74.

<sup>166</sup> Easton J. P. Haas, C A, *Titanic: Destination Disaster* (1987), p40.

<sup>167</sup> Harrison, *The Case for Captain Lord* 1997, p8.

<sup>168</sup> Harrison, *A Titanic Myth* (1986), p142.

<sup>169</sup> Harrison, *A Titanic Myth* (1986), p169.

<sup>170</sup> Harrison *A Titanic Myth* (1986), p172.

<sup>171</sup> Harrison, *A Titanic Myth* (1986), p246.

<sup>172</sup> Reade, p91, citing personal information obtained from the MMSA.

<sup>173</sup> Harrison, *A Titanic Myth* (1986), p164.

<sup>174</sup> Harrison, *A Titanic Myth* (1986), p267.

<sup>175</sup> Harrison, *A Titanic Myth* (1986), p146.

<sup>176</sup> USNI *Proceedings* August 1969, cited in Reade, p313. Mr Harrison's letter is set out in full in Dave Billnitzer's website, op.cit.

<sup>177</sup> Gillespie, J, *THS Commutator*, vol 23 no. 145, 1999, cited by Dave Billnitzer in his website, op.cit. (my italics). The text is available on the Titanic Historical Society website: [www.titanichistoricalsociety.org/articles/rocket.asp](http://www.titanichistoricalsociety.org/articles/rocket.asp)

<sup>178</sup> Molony, p133, p107.

<sup>179</sup> Molony, p110, p118.

<sup>180</sup> Molony, p140.

<sup>181</sup> Molony, p108, p111.

<sup>182</sup> Molony, p131.

<sup>183</sup> Molony, p112.

<sup>184</sup> Molony, p112 (emphasis added).

<sup>185</sup> Molony, p116; BI6917 (Lord).

<sup>186</sup> Molony, p119.

<sup>187</sup> Molony, p183.

<sup>188</sup> Molony, p105.

<sup>189</sup> Molony, p112.

<sup>190</sup> Harrison, *A Titanic Myth* (1986), p173.

<sup>191</sup> Molony, p138.

<sup>192</sup> Molony, p118.

<sup>193</sup> Rockets fired by the *Carpathia* to advertise her presence to *Titanic* survivors in lifeboats.

<sup>194</sup> Molony, p183.

<sup>195</sup> Affidavit of Captain Stanley Lord, 25 June 1959, extracted in Reade, p350.

<sup>196</sup> Molony, p131.

<sup>197</sup> Merchant Shipping Act 1894, cited in Reade, Appendix B, p347.

<sup>198</sup> Beesley, L, *The Loss of the SS Titanic – Its Story and Its Lessons* (1912), included in Winocour, J, (ed.) *The Story of the Titanic As Told by Its Survivors* (1960), p35.

<sup>199</sup> BI14168-14172 (Lightoller).

<sup>200</sup> BI8025 (Stone).

<sup>201</sup> BI8027 (Stone).

<sup>202</sup> BI7984 (Stone).

<sup>203</sup> BI7895 (Stone).

<sup>204</sup> BI7906 (Stone) (emphasis added).

<sup>205</sup> Molony, p106.

<sup>206</sup> Molony, p107.

<sup>207</sup> Reade, p320.

<sup>208</sup> Gibson, Letter to Captain Lord dated 18 April 1912. The text is set out in Reade, p356-7 and Molony, p333. The original is available in the Merseyside Maritime Museum D/LO Item 3/2.

<sup>209</sup> BI15397 (Boxhall).

<sup>210</sup> BI7697 (Gibson).

<sup>211</sup> BI7755 (Gibson).

<sup>212</sup> BI7756 (Gibson).

<sup>213</sup> Molony, p140.

<sup>214</sup> Molony, p141.

<sup>215</sup> Molony, p143.

<sup>216</sup> See below.

<sup>217</sup> BI7515 (Gibson).

<sup>218</sup> BI7515 (Gibson).

<sup>219</sup> BI7517 (Gibson).

<sup>220</sup> BI7651 (Gibson).

<sup>221</sup> BI7328 (Gibson).

<sup>222</sup> BI7624 (Gibson).

<sup>223</sup> BI7552 (Gibson).

<sup>224</sup> BI7756 (Gibson).

<sup>225</sup> BI7755 (Gibson).

<sup>226</sup> BI 7579 (Gibson).

<sup>227</sup> BI7597 (Gibson).

<sup>228</sup> BI 8577, 8579 (Stewart).

<sup>229</sup> BI 8590 (Stewart).

<sup>230</sup> BI 8592-3 (Stewart).

<sup>231</sup> BI 8616 (Stewart).

<sup>232</sup> BI 8619 (Stewart).

<sup>233</sup> BI8632 (Stewart).

<sup>234</sup> US 736 (Evans).

<sup>235</sup> US738 (Evans). See also US747 and BI9059 (Evans).

<sup>236</sup> US748 (Evans).

<sup>237</sup> BI 8307 (Groves).

<sup>238</sup> BI 8310 (Groves).

<sup>239</sup> BI 8305 (Groves).

<sup>240</sup> US745 (Evans).

<sup>241</sup> US 745 (Evans).

<sup>242</sup> Bisset, J, *Tramps and Ladies* (1959), p232.

<sup>243</sup> BI7820 (Stone); BI7940 (Stone); Letter from Stone to Lord dated 18 April 1912, extracted in Reade, p355. The original available at the Merseyside Maritime Museum: Deposit D/LO, item3/1.

<sup>244</sup> Molony, Chapter 12.

<sup>245</sup> See Molony, p111.

<sup>246</sup> BI7829, 7871, 7884 (Stone): 'I told [Gibson] I had seen those white rockets from the ship and that I had told the Captain about it...' (no mention of movement).

<sup>247</sup> BI7949 (Stone). Note that Stone says he must have told Gibson to say 'disappearing' – not 'disappeared' - because he saw the light 'for twenty minutes after that' (BI7972). He sent Gibson down at 2 o'clock (BI7971), and so the light disappeared at 2.20am – the exact time the *Titanic* sank.

<sup>248</sup> BI7820 (Stone).

<sup>249</sup> Letter from Stone to Lord dated 18 April 1912, extracted in Reade, p355.

<sup>250</sup> Letter from Stone to Lord dated 18 April 1912, extracted in Reade, p355.

<sup>251</sup> BI8069 (Stone) (emphasis added).

<sup>252</sup> Letter from Gibson to Lord, dated 18 April 1912 The original available at the Merseyside Maritime Museum: Deposit D/LO, item3/2.

<sup>253</sup> BI8037 (Stone).

<sup>254</sup> Letter from Stone to Lord. See also BI8088 (Stone).

<sup>255</sup> BI7705 (Gibson).

<sup>256</sup> BI7733 (Gibson).

- <sup>257</sup> BI6754 (Lord).
- <sup>258</sup> BI 6991 (Lord).
- <sup>259</sup> US733 (Lord).
- <sup>260</sup> A manoeuvre in which she first turned to port, then to starboard to swing her stern clear of the berg.
- <sup>261</sup> This evidence is summarised by Reade, Chapter 4, ‘Her stern was swinging, practically dead south.’
- <sup>262</sup> BI8178 (Groves).
- <sup>263</sup> BI8197 (Groves).
- <sup>264</sup> BI8197 (Groves).
- <sup>265</sup> Molony, p61.
- <sup>266</sup> Molony, p75.
- <sup>267</sup> BI7930 (Stone).
- <sup>268</sup> BI7908 (Stone).
- <sup>269</sup> BI7915 (Aspinall).
- <sup>270</sup> BI7916 (Stone).
- <sup>271</sup> BI7921 (Stone).
- <sup>272</sup> BI7929 (Stone).
- <sup>273</sup> BI7597 (Gibson).
- <sup>274</sup> BI7916 (Stone).
- <sup>275</sup> US p729; BI6790, 6881,6898 (Lord); Affidavit of Captain Stanley Lord dated 25 June 1959, extracted in Reade, p349.
- <sup>276</sup> BI6957(Lord); Affidavit of Captain Stanley Lord dated 25 June 1959, extracted in Reade, p352.
- <sup>277</sup> ‘Extracts from a tape-recorded conversation between Captain Stanley Lord and Mr Leslie Harrison, February, 1961’, National Maritime Museum, Caird Library, MS85/049.
- <sup>278</sup> Molony, p169-172.
- <sup>279</sup> Molony, p173.
- <sup>280</sup> Reade, p59-62.
- <sup>281</sup> Reade, p62.
- <sup>282</sup> The story told by these two men is examined in detail by Reade in Chapters 11 – ‘Boston: Captain Lord crosses his Rubicon’, and 12 – ‘Fact and Fantasy from a Donkeyman.’
- <sup>283</sup> US p729 (Lord).
- <sup>284</sup> US p728 (Lord).
- <sup>285</sup> US p728 (Lord).
- <sup>286</sup> Molony, p128.
- <sup>287</sup> Molony, p128-130.
- <sup>288</sup> Molony, p157.
- <sup>289</sup> Foweraker, ‘A Miscarriage of Justice – The Case of the S.S. ‘Californian’, *The Nautical Magazine*, April 1913, p363; May 1913, p471; June 1913, p577.
- <sup>290</sup> Molony, p106.
- <sup>291</sup> Molony never explains the mechanism by which rockets can convey specific messages to specific addressees.
- <sup>292</sup> Molony, p284.
- <sup>293</sup> Molony, p285.
- <sup>294</sup> Molony, p106.
- <sup>295</sup> Molony, p141.
- <sup>296</sup> Molony, p183.
- <sup>297</sup> Molony, p180.
- <sup>298</sup> Reade, p328.
- <sup>299</sup> BI7853 (Stone).
- <sup>300</sup> BI 7978 (Stone).
- <sup>301</sup> BI7994 (Stone).
- <sup>302</sup> BI7870 (Stone).
- <sup>303</sup> BI7871; 7905 (Stone).
- <sup>304</sup> BI7336 (Lord).
- <sup>305</sup> BI 7094 (Lord).
- <sup>306</sup> Letter from Lord to Board of Trade dated 10 August 1912, extracted in Reade, p268-270, p269 (my emphasis).
- <sup>307</sup> Letter from Lord to Board of Trade dated 10 August 1912, extracted in Reade, p268-270, p270 (my emphasis).
- <sup>308</sup> Letter from Lord to AH Gill dated 17 October 1912, extracted Reade, p117; Billnitzer’s website, op.cit.
- <sup>309</sup> Harrison, *A Titanic Myth* (1986), p247.
- <sup>310</sup> Molony, p114.
- <sup>311</sup> Harrison, *A Titanic Myth* (1986), p247.
- <sup>312</sup> US p728.
- <sup>313</sup> BI7336 (Lord).
- <sup>314</sup> BI7374 (Lord).
- <sup>315</sup> ‘Extracts from a tape-recorded conversation between Captain Stanley Lord and Mr Leslie Harrison, February, 1961’, National Maritime Museum, Caird Library, MS85/049. (Underlining in original.)
- <sup>316</sup> BI7853 (Stone).
- <sup>317</sup> BI6937 (Lord). Company signals tended to be coloured, not white, and did not use rockets: see Reade, p67.
- <sup>318</sup> BI7871 (Stone).
- <sup>319</sup> BI6943-6945 (Lord).
- <sup>320</sup> Letter from Lord to Board of Trade dated 10 August 1912, extracted in Reade, p268-270, p269 (my emphasis).
- <sup>321</sup> Harrison, *A Titanic Myth* (1986), Preface.
- <sup>322</sup> Harrison, *A Titanic Myth* (1986), p263.
- <sup>323</sup> Molony, p97.
- <sup>324</sup> Molony, p156.
- <sup>325</sup> Molony, p180.
- <sup>326</sup> See Reade, p145.
- <sup>327</sup> Reade, p146.
- <sup>328</sup> See Reade, p146.
- <sup>329</sup> See Reade, p147.
- <sup>330</sup> BI 8727, 8728, 8748 (Stewart).
- <sup>331</sup> See Reade p152-3 for a summary of the newspaper reports.
- <sup>332</sup> *Boston Traveller*, 19 April 1912, p7. Cited in Reade, p153.
- <sup>333</sup> *Boston Post*, 24 April, p5. Cited in Reade, p157.

<sup>334</sup> 25 April 1912. Cited in Reade, p193.

<sup>335</sup> 26 April 1912. Cited in Reade, p197-8.

<sup>336</sup> Harrison, *A Titanic Myth*, p249 and p251.

<sup>337</sup> 26 April 1912. Cited in Reade, p197.

<sup>338</sup> Reade, p200.

<sup>339</sup> Reade, p200.

<sup>340</sup> Molony, p241.

<sup>341</sup> Molony, p241.

<sup>342</sup> Harrison *A Titanic Myth* (1986), p35; *Defending Captain Lord – A Titanic Myth Part Two* (1996), p82.

<sup>343</sup> Harrison, *A Titanic Myth* (1986), p23.

<sup>344</sup> BI7245 (Lord).

<sup>345</sup> Letter from Lord to Board of Trade dated 10 August 1912, extracted in Reade, p268-270, p269.

<sup>346</sup> Harrison, L, *Defending Captain Lord – A Titanic Myth Part Two* (1996), p115.

<sup>347</sup> Harrison, L, *Defending Captain Lord – A Titanic Myth Part Two* (1996), p119

<sup>348</sup> Harrison, L, *A Titanic Myth* (1986), Preface.