

'Practically Unsinkable'

The designers of the Olympic class super liners never claimed the ship was unsinkable or exceptionally fast. The Titanic and her sisters were designed for comfort and luxury rather than speed, there was no intention to create the ships to capture the lucrative Blue Ribband award, which was awarded to ships that crossed the Atlantic in the fastest time.

The reputable engineering Journal of the day, 'The Shipbuilder' claimed that the ship's system of watertight bulkheads "made the vessel practically unsinkable". Unfortunately the word "practically" was soon to be forgotten and everyone including the press assumed the ship was unsinkable.

The sheer size and solidity of the Titanic and her sisters together with their grandeur and opulence encouraged most people to believe that they were truly unsinkable.

In order to strengthen the hull and increase its safety, the Titanic had 15 watertight bulkheads that divided the ship into 16 compartments. Should a collision occur, theory was that the ship would still float with two compartments flooded, or even with all four of the smaller bow compartments flooded. Unfortunately the bulkheads only reached 3m (10 ft) above the water line, allowing water to flood from one compartment into the next like an ice cube tray, therefore this defeated the purpose of the bulkheads.

The supposedly watertight bulkheads were in fact pierced by a series of doors. All of these doors were watertight, but only 12, at the very bottom of the ship could be closed electrically from the Bridge. The remaining 30 had to be closed by hand. After the Titanic's collision with the iceberg a few of the manually operated doors were closed, some were left open and others were re-opened to make it easier to set up the water pumps.