

"I believe she's gone, Hardy"

These were the words *Titanic's* 1st officer Murdoch spoke to John Hardy, *Titanic's* chief steward 2nd class about 40 minutes before the *Titanic* went down. It is one of the few quotations by Murdoch which have survived until today. It also is common belief that these words referred to the *Titanic* sinking – and this understanding agrees with Hardy's aboard the stricken liner in that April night in 1912.

However, there is a flaw: It had been Murdoch who had already parted from 3rd Pitman with another famous quotation, "Good-bye, good luck", when Pitman left the *Titanic* in the second lifeboat about an hour before Murdoch said to Hardy: "I believe she's gone, Hardy". And Pitman stated at both inquiries that he was under the impression that Murdoch might have thought that they would not see each other again. This rather stylish parting, including a shake hands, is of course an indication that Murdoch knew already then that the situation was not only dangerous but that the *Titanic* was indeed in a sinking condition.

How did Murdoch know when others did not at that stage of time?

Murdoch would have been in the perfect state to know: The collision had happened during his watch and he was not supposed to leave the bridge until either being ordinarily relieved at the end of the watch or ordered away by the captain at an earlier stage of time. Thus Murdoch was on the bridge when the damage was reported – and those reports were of course made to the bridge.

Considering that Murdoch knew already at the beginning of the loading and lowering of the lifeboats that the *Titanic* was sinking, it does not make any sense that he first of all parted from Pitman with "good-bye, good luck" and, later on, tells Hardy: "I believe she's gone, Hardy" as if the fact that the *Titanic* might sink crossed Murdoch's mind for the first time then. Hence a close examination of the circumstances under which Murdoch made that remark is necessary.

Hardy's evidence at the American Inquiry relating to these words goes as follows:

Mr. HARDY. *Of course I had great respect and great regard for Chief Officer Murdock [sic], and I was walking along the deck forward with him, and he said, "I believe she is gone, Hardy"; and that is the only time I thought she might sink; when he said that.*

Senator FLETCHER. *How long was that before your boat was lowered?*

Mr. HARDY. *It was a good half hour, I should say, sir.*

Senator FLETCHER. *Where did he go then, do you know?*

Mr. HARDY. *He was walking toward the afterpart of the deck. That was before all the boats had gone.*

Although Hardy gives not much information, some important pieces can be deduced:

1.) When did Murdoch say those words?

Hardy stated it was "a good half hour" before Hardy left the *Titanic*. As Hardy left in boat D, which was lowered at around 2.05 am, it was roughly 1.35 am.

2.) Where were these words said?

Hardy stated that he was walking forward with Murdoch – and Murdoch went astern afterwards. Looking at Murdoch's movements in that night a few general directions can be deduced: He was in charge of the starboard side and started with boat 7 and worked his way forward then: 5, 3 and 1, although 5th officer Lowe credited the loading and lowering of boat 1 to himself and leading stoker Hendrickson to the officer who fired distress rockets from the

starboard bridge wing [1]. Boat 1 was lowered at about 1.10 am which is roughly an hour before Hardy left, hence this is too early. Murdoch's next steps on the boat deck were bringing over women and children from port to starboard and get them away in boat 9, after that, he saw that boats 11, 13 and 15 were launched so he now worked his way aft which is the wrong direction.

After boat 15 was lowered, Murdoch was seen at boat 10 which latest research sees being launched at about 1.40 am [2]. So Murdoch must have walked forward from boat 15 to boat 10 – and he might have walked forward on the port side as there had been trouble at boats 14 and 16 on port [3]. The direction fits, the time roughly fits, however, the circumstances are only nearly perfect as Hardy also stated that Murdoch was walking to the aft part again after making that statement so it seems that the pair was walking further forward most probably after the successful launch of boat 10. While all wooden boats on starboard had already gone, there were still boat 4 and boat 2 to be lowered on port. It might have been that Murdoch simply checked whether he was needed on port or whether he could return to starboard and see his last two boats lowered from there – collapsibles C and A.

So it seems likely that Murdoch said these words to Hardy when they walked from boat 10 to boat 2. Hardy should eventually leave the *Titanic* in boat D which was lowered from the davits of boat 2. – Murdoch might have checked something at boat 2, perhaps he exchanged ideas of how to continue with chief officer Wilde (2nd officer Lightoller was still engaged with boat 4 on deck A thus not present on the boat deck and according to 4th officer Boxhall chief officer Wilde was at boat 2). With Wilde at boat 2, there was no need for Murdoch to work there, too, thus he returned to the starboard side and if he did not cross the bridge but used another way (probably to call a few men to give him a hand) he indeed had to go aft again. So I am of the opinion that Murdoch said the words "I believe, she's gone, Hardy" when going from boat 10 to boat 2 on the port side.

3.) What did these words refer to?

Hardy mentions no conversation and gives no other details – just this quotation.

Dealing shortly with structure of any conversation, it has to be pointed out that each word said is a kind of message that has to be interpreted by the receiver. Whether the receiver gets the meaning the sender had wanted to get him cannot be said. But it happens every day to all of us and is the reason for many misunderstandings.

In case of the "I believe, she's gone, Hardy" quotation, we have Hardy's interpretation of Murdoch's words but we do not know whether Murdoch actually meant what Hardy understood he was saying.

When just looking at the plain words, the following can be said for sure:

"I believe" indicates that Murdoch is not entirely sure but he is under some impression.

"she's gone" – these words refer to a "she" which the 1st officer believed to have gone.

"Hardy" is of course a direct address.

So of all those words just the "she" has to be interpreted as it is not a precise description. Thus Hardy has to take circumstances or the conversation before into consideration when interpreting Murdoch's message.

Naturally, anybody thinks of the *Titanic* as "she" first, but there had been another "she" in that night ... and the other "she" had been under observation by 4th officer Boxhall from the bridge and had been seen by many people aboard *Titanic*. Until boat 10 left, this "she" was pointed out to passengers as the ship that was coming to their rescue [4].

4th officer Boxhall stated that shortly before he left in boat 2 (at 1.45 am!), he could only see the stern light of the mystery ship after she had shown her masthead and red side light for some time before.

Those working on the starboard side of course also heard about the lights of another ship being sighted, they knew of course that rockets were fired to attract the attention of the mystery ship in sight. Imagine what must have been in Murdoch's mind ... He was working on starboard hence he was unable to see the lights himself. But he saw the rockets and he must have heard the rumours. It seems very likely that he assumed the other ship was approaching. And then he went to the port side ... And instead of easily detecting another ship close by, he obviously saw nothing or a mere white light which Boxhall took as a stern light. Either before loading boat 10 or after launching that boat 10, Murdoch needed somebody to communicate his disappointment that the hope for rescue had faded. As Hardy was around, the steward is the person Murdoch confides in: "I believe she's gone, Hardy." No talk about something special before or after that – just a statement, possibly in direct conjunction with those reassuring words the crew had used to calm down the passengers, telling them that there was a ship coming to their rescue.

Murdoch will have seen the white light, possibly observed it while loading and lowering boat 10 and noticing that the other ship, "she", showed no reaction whatever. And when walking forward with the steward, Murdoch felt no necessity to refer especially to what the crew talked about the minutes before (as Hardy may have been around, too, or Murdoch had not noted that the steward who had worked with him before had not been at boat 10) but simply stated: "I believe, **she** is gone, Hardy" when the officer saw his hopes fading.

Hardy of course had to interpret the meaning of "she". Hardy did not think of another steamer (he may have not seen it or did not pay any attention to it) as "she" but only of the *Titanic*. And as the *Titanic* was already noticeably down by the bow, Murdoch's words with the name "*Titanic*" inserted instead of "she" also made sense. Unfortunately, Hardy's interpretation does not agree with Murdoch's behaviour at boat 5. So it seems more likely that the steward misunderstood the officer. Murdoch was talking about the mystery steamer that was either showing her stern light (a clear indication of a ship going away as no ship approaches another one stern first under ordinary circumstances) or already invisible to the 1st officer.

[1] see **Susanne Störmer**, *William McMaster Murdoch. A Career at Sea, Appendix II, Boat 1*, Elmshorn, 2002, for more details

[2] *Titanic: The Lifeboat Launching Sequence Re-examined* by Bill Wormstedt, Tad Fitch & George Behe (pre-published access, 3 December 2001)

[3] see **Susanne Störmer**, *William McMaster Murdoch. A Career at Sea, Appendix II, The Suicide*, Elmshorn, 2002, for more details

[4] see **Senan Molony**, *A Ship Accused*, Dublin, 2002, for more details

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