Holmes Lecture 2016:
Fish and Ships
Dr Simon Benson and Paul Stott

Audio-visual display before the lecture starts:
The film being shown before the start of the lecture is of the building of RMS Olympic in Belfast. Olympic was the first of a series of three sister ships delivered to the White Star Line between 1911 and 1914, the second being Titanic and the third Britannic. Titanic famously sank on her maiden voyage and Britannic was sunk by a mine when operating as a First World War hospital ship. Olympic, alone of the sisters, reached the end of her natural life, being broken up on the River Tyne in 1935. Much of Olympic was recycled, with the first class dining room being installed in the White Swan Hotel in Alnwick, Northumberland, where it remains in use to this day.

The words are from a BBC radio documentary: “Titanic in her own words”. Titanic was one of the first generation of ships equipped with radio, enabling communications with shore stations and other ships using Morse code. ‘CQD’ was the first maritime distress code and was used by Titanic’s radio officer, Jack Philips, along with the more famous ‘SOS’, to call for help. Messages can be heard between Titanic and the shore station at Cape Race in Newfoundland (the point of North America closest to Europe) and other ships that became famous because of the disaster: Carpathia, Californian and her sister Olympic, in particular. Sadly none were close enough to avoid what remains the second largest peacetime loss of life at sea.

The Titanic disaster changed everything for ship designers and safety of life at sea became a top consideration in the construction of ships as a result. This lecture is about why you would probably be safe today aboard a ship that encountered an iceberg as Titanic did in 1912.

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