

## MR J BRUCE ISMAY - OBITUARY

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AN ABLE SHIPOWNER



Joseph Bruce Ismay

Mr Bruce Ismay, who died yesterday at his residence, 15 Hill Street, Mayfair, at the age of 74, was well known, particularly in Liverpool, as an able ship owner.

His grandfather, Joseph Ismay, was a builder of small boats at Maryport, in Cumberland, and his father, Thomas Henry Ismay, was one of the great outstanding figures in British shipping. Thomas Henry acquired the White Star Line, which was originally engaged in the Australian trade, formed the Oceanic Steam Navigation Company in conjunction with the firm of Ismay, Imrie & Co, and entered the transatlantic service.

A long and successful association then began with Harland and Wolff of Belfast, which constructed all the White Star liners.

Born in Liverpool on December 12, 1862, Joseph Bruce Ismay was sent to Elstree and then to Harrow, where he was in a Small house. In his younger days he was fond of Association Football and lawn tennis. After leaving school he served an apprenticeship in his father's firm, Ismay, Imrie & Co, and then represented it in New York.

In 1888 he married Julia Florence, daughter of Mr George R. Schieffelin, of New York, the heiress to a pharmaceutical fortune.

Her sister afterwards married his brother, Mr C.B. Ismay, who died in May 1924.

When his father died in 1899 he succeeded to the control of the White Star Line, which was already very successful, and he showed both hereditary and developed skill in the planning of large vessels. In 1902 the International Mercantile Marine Company, sometimes known as the American Shipping Trust, was formed to control Atlantic passenger fares and cargo rates, and Mr Bruce Ismay accepted a favourable offer for the inclusion of his line. Not long afterwards, in 1904, he succeeded Mr Griscom, of Philadelphia, as president and managing director. His policy was one of building large and palatial ships not of the highest speed, such as the Celtic, Cedric, Adriatic, and Baltic, which in due course have been succeeded by larger and more luxuriously fitted vessels. Mr Ismay also favoured Southampton as the mail and passenger port. In 1908 he started the cadet ship Mersey for training mercantile marine officers; he also gave practical support to camp training for the auxiliary forces and to Mr Alfred Mosely's scheme of exchanging visits between British and American teachers.



With his wife  
Julia Florence



Lord Pirrie and Bruce Ismay inspecting Titanic just prior to her launch, 31 May 1911

Mr Ismay was on board the Titanic when she was sunk by collision with an iceberg in April 1912. By his own account he was in the position of an ordinary passenger and exercised no influence or control of any sort over the captain. He stated that after the ship struck he helped for nearly two hours in clearing the starboard boats, helping women and children into them, and lowering them over the side, when at last he got into the forward collapsible boat there was not a woman on the boat deck nor any passenger of any class.

In view of the fact that more than 1,500 persons perished in the disaster, Mr Ismay was the subject of criticism, not well informed, both in England and in America, for his conduct in leaving the Titanic at all. From this criticism the late Lord Mersey, in his masterly report on the loss of the vessel, expressed complete disagreement.

Nevertheless, the affair cast a shadow over Mr Ismay. In the following year he retired from the presidency of the International Mercantile Marine Company in accordance with an arrangement made some time before the disaster. In June, 1916, he resigned his position as a director of the company and a member of the British Committee. In 1919 he gave £25,000 to inaugurate a national Mercantile Marine Fund as a token of his admiration for the War service of British merchantmen.

This followed on a gift of £11,000 from his wife and himself for the benefit of seamen's widows.



A Titanic. Grave  
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.  
Fairview Cemetery.  
Erected by Bruce Ismay

Among other business interests Ismay was at one time chairman of the Asiatic Steam Navigation Company and a director of the London, Midland & Scottish Railway, the Liverpool and London & Globe Insurance Company, the Sea Insurance Company, and the Birmingham Canal Navigation.

He was also chairman of the Liverpool Steamship Owners' Protection Association, the Liverpool and London War Risks Association, and the Delta Insurance Company.

In business Ismay was accounted an austere man. He was certainly taciturn by nature, but could be a charming host. He had an extraordinary memory; his success was due to his industry, integrity, and acumen, qualities which he inherited from his father.

Last year Mr Ismay suffered from a serious illness and decided to withdraw from most of his business activities. He spent most of his remaining years in retirement in Costelloe in County Galway, on the West Coast of Ireland, but died at his house in London. A few days ago he was again taken ill, and the end came quickly. Mrs Ismay survives him with two sons and two daughters. His wife who survived him by 26 years had not been on the Titanic voyage and would never allow her husband to talk about the disaster.

The younger of the sons, Mr George Bruce Ismay, continues to be associated with North Atlantic shipping through Cunard White Star Limited. The elder daughter, Margaret, married Brigadier-General Ronald Cheape, and the younger, Evelyn, married Mr Basil Sanderson (a son of the late Mr Harold Sanderson, well known in North Atlantic shipping).