

Hello –I am a Year 8 pupil here at the school. I have recently completed my FPQ, which is an annual project where students complete extensive research into a topic of their interest, producing a product or essay on the information that they have uncovered. My project was on the historic RMS Titanic.

Towards the start of my project, I was unsure on what aspect of the luxury cruise liner to focus my project on; the intricate designs built on a colossal scale that still contribute to ship architecture, the grand interior features, the way that contemporary ships and hotels try to emulate the style that captured so many imaginations originally, or the general knowledge on the ship's tragic maiden voyage. I soon realised that many historians do not consider the human side to the event, and the psychological effect of the ordeal on survivors. I believe that the impact of families on their loved ones who perished too is an aspect which is not considered often enough. Therefore, I focused my project on a detailed, developed essay, which uncovered five passengers on the RMS Titanic and aimed to analyse my research question 'How did the disaster impact ordinary civilians, families and communities?'.

The story of this luxury cruise liners' tragic maiden voyage is widely known, so much so that in 2012, the Smithsonian Museum in Washington declared 'Titanic' the third most recognised word in the world - after God and Coca Cola. This has inspired many museums, collections and displays on the history of the Titanic.

When I visited the Merseyside Maritime Museum in Liverpool, and the Titanic Hotel at Stanley Docks, I developed my knowledge on the Titanic through the eye-opening gallery 'Titanic and Liverpool: The Untold Story'. This unearthed the stories of the individual passengers on board the ship, from rich billionaires going on a holiday to America indulging in the luxuries of a first class lifestyle, to the unnoticed and unrecognised staff who worked tirelessly to satisfy the travellers on the world's largest moving object. It was here that I decided whom I was going to write about: first class passenger Irene Wallach Harris, second class passengers Michel and Edmond Navratil, third class passenger Bridget Donohue and a member of staff working on the ship named Arthur Lawrence. Each one of these people was chosen for a specific reason – from the unbelievable events prior and after the sinking or the authenticity of documents on these passengers that I was able to obtain.

Perhaps one of the most interesting passengers I researched was Irene Wallach Harris, otherwise known as Renee. She was the wife of Henry Harris, a famous Broadway producer. The couple were travelling back from theatrical negotiations in London in a 1st class suite aboard the RMS Titanic to their home in New York. In the early hours of 15th April 1912, Henry Harris died with 1,500 other men, women, and children, however Renee escaped on the last lifeboat, collapsible lifeboat D. I chose to research Renee because she is an example of how widowed women had to be mentally and physically ready to face the realities of the Titanic sinking. The social constraints on women in the Edwardian era began to change as widowed women had to find ways to make money to support themselves and their family after the men in their family, who were considered superior to women and would work to earn a living wage, died. To help with this, the Titanic Relief Fund was formed, where poverty-stricken passengers could claim compensation money. Renee transformed herself from a Titanic survivor left with thousands of pounds in debts after her husbands' death, to the first female Broadway theatrical producer, showing a rare glimpse of female empowerment during the 1920s.

A project qualification is not like working in a classroom – it develops skills on how to properly conduct research and become better and more articulate with public speaking at a university level while researching about a topic you are passionate about. I have learnt how to complete work to deadlines, determine whether a websites' information is reliable or not, and I have boosted my confidence levels with performing on stage at events such as presentation evening. This is where I perform my work to my family, friends and school governors who are interested in my project. I would really recommend completing a project qualification no matter what year you are in school, for they will change the way you think, work and live in life.

Year 8 student