

# Titanic: The Last Photograph?

by Senan Molony

## ET Research

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THIS photograph is the last known picture of RMS *Titanic* on her maiden voyage. It was taken at Crosshaven, Co Cork, Ireland, just after the vessel departed Queenstown.

In September 2003, an album of photographs originally owned by passenger Stanley May, including one billed as the last ever taken of the *Titanic*, was sold at auction for £37,000 Sterling, a world record.

May's final photo shows the ship turning for the mouth of Cork Harbour, and was certainly taken earlier than the one shown here. In other words it is not the ultimate glimpse.

In 1997 a mocked-up image was published purporting to show the *Titanic* in mid-Atlantic on her maiden voyage, supposedly taken from a passing ship, and including part of a deck rail for verisimilitude. This was in fact a computer-generated "impression" of what she might have looked like.

Although the illustration is credited to a private collection in the name of "Anthony J. Kasmareck," it has been offered as an explanation that the publisher omitted a caption that might have made clear that the image was an invention.

A shoreline photograph of a four-stack vessel has often been represented as the last ever picture of Captain E.J. Smith's final and fatal command (as shown in *Maiden Voyage*, by Geoffrey Marcus), but in fact this is a mistake. The picture was certainly taken in Cork, but is of the *Titanic*'s sister ship, *Olympic*.

Instead, the photograph shown here - which only came to light in 2001 - appears to be the last known authentic snap of the RMS *Titanic* on the surface of the ocean. It is thus very probably the valedictory vision prior to her rediscovery on the seabed in September 1985.

[Incidentally, the last people to see the *Titanic* clearly may have been a party of French fishermen, unequipped with cameras -

### TITANIC SPLASHED 'DANGEROUSLY NEAR' TRAWLER

Our Boulogne correspondent writes that one of the last vessels to sight the *Titanic* was probably the Boulogne steamer trawler *Alsace*, which passed the liner on Thursday April 11, off the south-west coast of Ireland. The trawler appears to have been rather dangerously near to the *Titanic*, passing so close in fact that she was splashed with spray from the *Titanic*'s bow. The fishermen cheered the liner, and their salutations were responded to by the officer on the bridge.

(*The Times*, April 22, 1912, p.12)]

The last photograph of the *Titanic* was published in the *Castleknock Chronicle*, a yearbook for Castleknock College on the west side of Dublin. It was taken by a man named John Morrogh, and rediscovery of the "Morrogh Image" might be said to be an important development in the story of an ill-starred liner.



John Morrogh with his wife Aileen

John Morrogh, a past pupil of Castleknock College, was a 28-year-old newly-married British Army officer when his *Titanic* picture was taken. From a well-to-do Cork family whose wealth derived from a woollen mills and a share in De Beers diamonds, Morrogh very likely drove out to Crosshaven with his wife, Aileen, and some of his younger brothers for a glimpse of the passing leviathan.

Morrogh's younger brothers, Vincent and Stephen, were boarders at Castleknock College, and home on their Easter holidays in April 1912. It is probable the lads were excited beyond belief at the prospect of catching sight of the largest moving object ever made by man. Only the previous December, pupils at Castleknock had been treated to a slide show of the White Star giants.

The college yearbook gives the observations of one young boarder:

December 20 (1911). - The term is almost over - tomorrow is Vacation Day... At the beginning of the term it looked as far off as if we were looking through the large glass of a telescope, now it looms up in its full proportions. We had the usual raffle in the Play Hall before tea, and it is to be hoped that everyone minded the Dean's instructions to be sure to leave ourselves our train fare. I know of one unfortunate who was fourpence short of it, and had to go into debt possibly for the rest of his natural life... Father Campbell showed us some very fine slides of different parts of the country, and some good views of the building of the monster liners *Olympic* and *Titanic*...

Moustachioed John Morrogh climbed from the charabanc with his camera. His younger brothers were out before him, running down toward the cliff. "There she is! Look at her!"

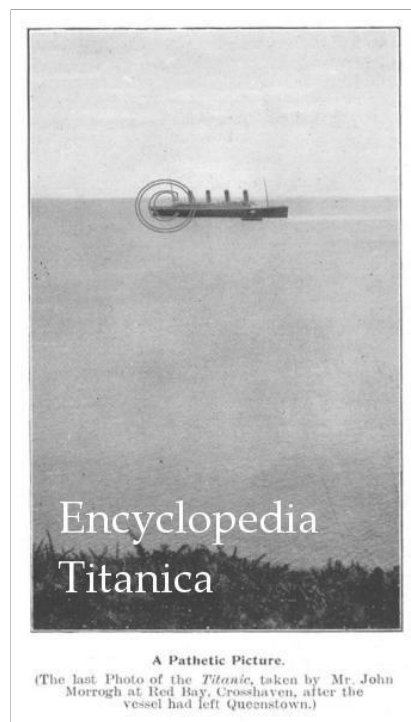
As Morrogh and his wife followed, fresh excited cries reached his ears: "She's moving! She's going away!"

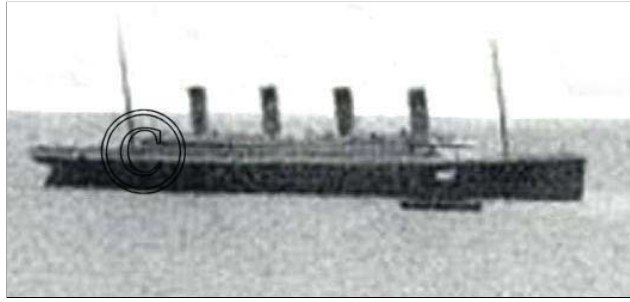
He walked briskly to where they were standing and verified that the RMS *Titanic* was indeed executing a slow wide turn to bring her head out towards Ringabella Bay. They watched for a while, then Stephen urged: "Let's chase her!"

Back in the car, they followed along the headland. It was a day of clear skies and perfect visibility.

At Red Bay, the *Titanic* had slowed to a stop. She was dropping her pilot, White Star shiphandler John Cotter, who had guided her out from Queenstown. Cotter climbed down a Jacob's ladder from a gangway door in the starboard side. He was the last man to alight before tragedy descended, a fact confirmed by the surviving harbour pilot's book from 1912.

It was about 2pm. John Morrogh had hastily erected his tripod on the bracken-covered slope as Stephen and Vincent cooed and gave admiring whistles. He then fired off the last known photograph of the RMS *Titanic*.





The developed print was given to the boys and brought to Dublin. Its historical interest meant it was destined to appear in the *Castleknock Chronicle* for 1911/12, labelled "A pathetic picture." While taken from a considerable distance, the quality is such that the covered A-deck windows immediately confirm that this is indeed the RMS *Titanic*, with the contemporary caption expressly declaring that the Morrogh Image was taken *AFTER* the vessel left Queenstown.

## FIRST WORLD WAR

The story does not stop there. John Morrogh, amateur photographer and army officer, would soon be caught up in the horrors of the First World War - as would many of his eight brothers. The story of the Morrogh brothers closely mirrors the shocking end of an age of glory led by three sisters - *Olympic*, *Titanic* and *Britannic*.

It was all so different in the Spring of 1912. Young Stephen Morrogh, the photographer's brother, was having a wonderful cricket season. In rugby, he was "easily the best back on the field in the first Belvedere match," and he was also described as a "promising young cox" in the college rowing.

The school itself had strong connections with Crosshaven, where the *Titanic* picture was taken. The College "Present" played the College "Past" in a net match there on May 16, 1912, and John Morrogh was photographed among those who took part.

The yearbook recalls: "The Past won the toss and elected to bat first... On John Morrogh's coming in the score rose rapidly, until Morrogh was bowled by Donovan. The score was now 112, of which [John] Morrogh had made 61..."

Stephen Morrogh made just four runs in that match for the Present, being caught by Delaney off a delivery by his elder brother, John, who would take four wickets that day.



## A FAMILY OF SOLDIERS



Jack Morrogh

There are many cases of five or six men of an Irish family serving in the lower ranks of the army, some even joining after their brothers had fallen victim to the Germans. In no instance until the present circumstances has it come under our notice that the manhood of a well-off family, conducting an important business concern, has followed the lead of a brother already in the service and taken their place under the colours. The late Mr John Morrogh, of Douglas, Co Cork, and one time MP for South East Cork, and connected with important South African mining concerns, established at Douglas a woollen mill that became known throughout the world for the excellence of its products, and this important industry is being continued by his family. As employers they enjoy a most popular record, providing remunerative employment to many hands, whom they treat indulgently and with every consideration. The young members of the family are a credit to Irish manhood, being keen sportsmen and exceptionally fond of outdoor sports, and therefore when the country needed the help of her best men, there was a ready response from that family. Captain Jack Morrogh, of the 18th Royal Irish, gladly responded to the call, and in October [1914] he entered into the fighting in Flanders, was in many important engagements, took part in the terrible work at Ypres and Hill 60, where he was wounded. He was invalided home, but is rapidly regaining strength. Second Lieut. Frank Morrogh is in the famous Munsters, and has gone to the Dardanelles, where he got his baptism of fire when landing, the German-Turkish forces treating that regiment to a heavy shelling. He is a well-known gentleman jockey and cross-country rider. Mr Vincent Morrogh is a cadet, and may be expected at any time in the immediate future to receive his appointment. Corporal Ray Morrogh, of the Royal Engineers, is a keen motorist, and possesses a decided talent for engineering work. Mr P. Collins, a son of Mrs Morrogh and step-son of the late Mr John Morrogh, is also a corporal in the Royal Engineers. He is a clever engineer, selecting it as a profession, being a member of the firm of Collins and Morrogh, motor engineers, Cork. Second Lieut. Morrogh has joined the 27th Battalion (4th Tyneside Irish) Northumberland Fusiliers. Certainly the members of this family have responded well and generously to the call for men -- they are of the best fighting material, combining all that goes to make the best of soldiers; physical health, intelligence, ability, and courage. In wishing them the opportunity of distinguished service it is only to gratify a desire that is nearest to their hearts, but we in addition hope a safe return to them all, and in this wish we are in accord with the large circle of their friends."



William Morrogh



Frank Morrogh



Patrick Collins



Vincent Morrogh



Raymund Morrogh

Captain Morrogh's wound was a bullet through the cheek, received when commanding 'C' Company at St Julien, between May 3 and 9, 1915, according to the regimental history. He received a battlefield promotion to Major.

The next month, his brother Frank Morrogh was writing home from Gallipoli -

"JUNE, 1915 - The shelling we have had here is simply awful.

Words cannot describe the sight. You cannot tell the wounded or dead from the living... Dead are everywhere about the parapets, and the sun does its work quickly...

The fight here is a big one, but the men are splendid...

I am tip top; have had my baptism of fire. I would not change places with anyone."

A few days after writing the letter, Frank Morrogh was killed. One can imagine the effect on his brother John, having come so close to death himself.

But Major Morrogh was not to be spared from further fighting during his "rest and recuperation" at home in Ireland. Instead he found himself at the centre of the rebellion that would lead to the foundation of the modern Irish State.

When serving with the 3rd Reserve Battalion in Dublin, he was called out to help suppress the "Sinn Fein Rebellion" which had broken out across the city on Easter Monday, April 24, 1916, with the rebel Irish volunteers taking control of a variety of buildings and installations.

## SEIZED REBEL FLAG

On the morning of 27 April, 1916, Jack Morrogh commanded a party of British Army sharpshooters who succeeded in getting a good position on a rooftop close to the seat of the action in O'Connell Street, the main thoroughfare.

Thereupon he and his men managed to inflict a number of casualties on rebels barricaded into the General Post Office building, headquarters of the Insurrectionists. One sniper bullet wounded rebel commander James Connolly.



Connolly, later executed, was hit while supervising at a barricade in an alley beside the GPO. He walked quietly inside to have his smashed arm bandaged.

The flag seizure by Morrogh is reported in the *Campaigns and History of the Royal Irish Regiment*, by Brigadier General Stannus Geoghegan. (Blackwood & Sons, 1927). It states:

*"On the morning of 28 April, a party of British troops under Major Morrogh and Company Sergeant Major Banks succeeded in capturing the Republican flag from the roof of the Post Office."*

A photograph of British officers with a seized Irish Republican flag appears to include Major Morrogh. There is strong evidence that the men belong to the Royal Irish Regiment, since Captain Dick Burke of the 3rd Bn RIR appears on the extreme right.



[The captured colours went to the Imperial War Museum in London as a battle trophy, and were returned to Ireland to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rising in 1966.]

By 1918, Major Morrogh had been back on the Western Front for a year. Family fortunes had changed again with the vicissitudes of war. A third brother, Lieutenant William Morrogh, had been wounded and mentioned in despatches for gallantry. On recovery he was promoted and awarded the Military Cross.



And then a dramatic twist. *Titanic* photographer Major John Morrogh was captured when a massive German attack overran Royal Irish Regiment trenches at the village of Ronsoy, on the Somme river.

It came on March 21, 1918. The men of the R.I.R. had been bombarded with gas shells for more than four hours (from 4.30am) before the German onslaught through the fog.

The Regimental War Diary noted: "No-one of A and B Companies got back to the rest of the Battalion without being killed or taken prisoner."

Morrogh would later pen a long and fascinating memoir of how he fared thereafter – including an extraordinary escape from Holzminden Prisoner-of-War camp in central Germany. The means by which he did and 28 other officers did so was a tunnel – which was the first ever to result in a successful escape of prisoners in the European theatre.

### [Read Jack Morrogh's escape diary](#)

JACK Morrogh's role in the Easter Rising would come against him when he returned to Ireland at the end of the Great War. Ireland had been changed utterly by the failed Rising, which led to a guerrilla war for Independence that continued for years afterward.

Morrogh's granddaughter Aphra Peard comments: "I was always told that he got a tip off from someone that he was going to be murdered by the IRA. He left immediately for England. That was in 1921/22 I should imagine."

Arabella Bugliani, another granddaughter, who lives in Buenos Aires, echoes: "Things got too bad as he was a Major in the British Army and he was constantly being threatened because his regiment had put down the Rising."

She declares: "Once a group of guerrillas stormed into my grandparents' home and went all over asking for arms and bashing things about. My grandma walked after them, telling them there were no arms in the house. They stormed into the baby's room and my Grandma's Irish blood came to the top.

"She had recognized one of the boys as her friend's son so she let him have it. She told them to stop making a noise, not to wake up the baby and leave immediately - that she had had enough. And you, Name and Surname, you should be ashamed after all your mother and father have done for you, at what you are doing, etc etc. So that was the end of that episode.

"My mother was 12 when they left the country so she remembered quite a few episodes that happened... one of which tormented her for years. It was the occasion when they were driving along an earth road. My grandpa (Jack Morrogh) was driving, and my grandma was in front.

"The children were Kate (my mother), John (my uncle), Tish (my aunt) and the baby, Joan. They were all in the back. Just as the car went round a bend in the road, three tall men stepped out into the middle of the road. My grandpa said quietly: "This is it, Aileen."

"My mother knew that he meant he would be shot. He stopped the car, and one of the men looked into the car slowly, had a good look at the children and said: "OK, Major Morrogh, you may go on for today." And they drove off.

"Finally, my Grandmother left the house with the children saying that they were going to Dublin for a couple of days, and off they went, leaving everything behind. When my grandfather heard that they were safely in England, he crossed over and they came out to Uruguay.

"There he set up some kind of business deal with a partner and his partner did him out of most of his money. The second partner did him out of the rest of his money and then they came over to Argentina and started again from scratch.

"My grandmother, who had been brought up to be a lady and not to labour, went out to work and used to say that the only thing she didn't do was take dogs out for walks. She kept the family together, got the girls into an Irish convent school and my uncle went to a Catholic school for boys - and also kept all her friends and her social status.

"In Argentina people were only too eager to look down their noses at others. The kids all had grants at the schools and as they finished school and got jobs they slowly got salaries together and set themselves up again.

"When World War II broke out, my parents who had met a few months before, married immediately and signed up together as volunteers for the war. John, my uncle, also went to the war. And my grandfather Jack Morrogh, being a soldier at heart, also signed up.

"My father used to invite my grandfather, the Old Major, to the Mess whenever he could. My grandfather, who by that time was rather ancient to be at war, was in some kind of service for elderly people. When he went to my father's station, he thrived! He loved being among the military again and that gave him life.

"It was sometime during World War II that he met up with an old friend from Ireland and after a few drinks, the friend asked: 'Jack, do you remember such-and-such a day, when I went to see you and you weren't there?' 'Yes,' said Jack, 'I do.' 'Well, what luck you weren't in,' said the friend. 'If you had been, I was going to shoot you.'

"My father always spoke very highly of his father, Jack Morrogh, and said he was a very nice person. Grandad had been wounded in the First World War and had a bullet in his respiratory tract. I remember seeing the bullet - but I don't know what became of it.

"This seems to have triggered a cancer in his throat and he stayed in England after the Second World War. My grandmother went over when he was quite bad and stayed with him until he died.

"After he died, she came back and died in Argentina in 1964. The outstanding thing in both my grandparents was their sense of humour. My mother had a most fantastic sense of humour, obviously inherited from her parents."

**JACK MORROGH** was born in Cape Town, South Africa, on February 2, 1884, making him 28 years old when he snapped the last photograph of a monumental maiden voyage.

The Major's father had been a school teacher, but opted for high adventure instead of one before the blackboard and went out to South Africa in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

There he found a fairytale fortune through becoming one of the partners of Cecil Rhodes in De Beers, the firm set up to exploit the diamond mines of Kimberley.

Jack's father (also named John) there married the beautiful Kate Kennedy, who was also from the Old Country. They were wed in the heart of the South African mining belt circa 1880, and went on to have two boys and a girl.

Personal tragedy was looming however. An epidemic of Yellow Fever was swept across the country, and in the year of Jack Morrogh's birth struck the family with deadly force.

Jack's mother, Kate and her tiny daughter both succumbed to the ravages of the disease within a few days of contracting it. Kate passed away in December 1884 when her infant son, later to take the last picture of the *Titanic*, was only ten months old.

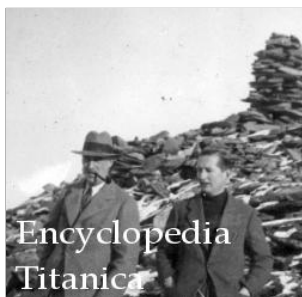
Some time later John Morrogh Snr returned to Ireland with his surviving children. There he married a former childhood sweetheart, who by this time was widowed with children of her own. The new couple then proceeded to have more children — with no fewer than a dozen between them in all!

John Morrogh Snr, who had sold his De Beers interests for £1 million — impossible riches in 1900 — now decided to stand for Parliament. He duly represented his native Cork South East Cork in the House of Commons. He also established that valuable sideline of the woollen mills, giving much gainful employment to the locality.

Jack's daughter later remembered that her father and all his brothers and sisters were brought up to be gentry and he had no idea about money, it being so plentiful and all encompassing.

The young Jack Morrogh went to Sandhurst, the British Army's officer training school, was rapidly commissioned, and took up duty in the regular army. He was posted to India, the jewel in the Crown, and served there for a decade before returning to Ireland.

Morrogh was in India with the British Army for up to 10 years. When he returned he got engaged, in 1908, to Aileen Egan. They married in 1910.



Jack in Ireland (1937)

The couple had four children — **Kate**, born 1911, **John** 1915, **Patricia** 1917, and **Joan**, 1920. The whole family left for Uruguay following the dangers in Ireland, choosing the country because they knew of another Irish family that had gone there. They intended to stay 'until the Troubles were over'. The family never really went back.

The family had an idyllic life in Uruguay. "My grandfather was the Manager of an estancia (ranch) and made lots of friends," said Apha. "Suddenly they lost all their money from one day to the next.

" My mother always said that when she was 18 they lost all their money. That would have been in 1929 so it must have something to do with the Depression. Also she said that someone in Uruguay did him out of all his money there.

The three girls, Joan, Patricia and Kate, went to Michael Ham Memorial College in Buenos Aires (over the River Plate in the Argentine.) The nuns refused to accept any fees from them in their straitened circumstances because the Morrogh family had been so good to the Blackrock nuns in Ireland and had given them a lot of money.

John, the only son, never went to a good school and his education was somewhat lacking.

"My mother said that her father had been a wonderful man but that he just could not cope without money and it broke him. He was never the same man again.

"My grandmother on the other hand was terrific and got all sorts of jobs to keep the family going. By this time they were living in Buenos Aires.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, Jack Morrogh found himself the most experienced former officer in the Argentine. He somehow went down to the Falkland Islands to defend them. "I suppose he was sent down in charge of a few men." His passport has a stamp dated October 7, 1939 from the Uruguayan consulate in Port Stanley. He didn't remain very long, being keen to see some real action again.

So Jack Morrogh made the long journey to England to join up once more. It was March 1942. This time he was to be bitterly disappointed, as the military authorities would not take him because of his age. His wife soon joined him as he searched for a useful role to play, at one point becoming so poor that he could "not afford a newspaper." For a man used to wealth, it was a profound blow to his pride.

Jack Morrogh never went back to Argentina, but stayed in London and died there on December 7, 1954, the 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pearl Harbour.

He died of cancer of the throat, said by the family to be the result of being gassed in the First World War, although he was a lifelong pipe-smoker. The end came at an address at Lyndhurst Gardens in Hampstead, a pied-à-terre place that had simply become another exile.

He was seventy years old and lies buried in Hampstead.

Morrogh relatives in Argentina — where the new generations speak Spanish — have now been supplied with copies of their forebear's astonishing *Titanic* photograph, a picture which had long been spoken of in family lore but which no living member had ever seen.

As Arabella Bugliani says: "My grandmother was Aileen Egan (Major Morrogh's wife). She died when I was 12 and for at least two years before that she was very feeble in her mind so all our conversations took place when I was very young.



"She told me they went to see the *Titanic* pass and were standing on a kind of hill. But that's all I remember."

Now there is proof – and a poignant picture for all generations.

## SOURCES

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The Vincentian community, Castleknock; Stephanie Morrogh, who provided the bulk of Major Morrogh's personal account of the escape; Arabella Bugliani of Buenos Aires who came up with the concluding pages and many memories of her grandfather; Ms Aphra Peard for supply of a photograph and for her reminiscences; Ms Jennifer Norris, Argentina; Johnnie Cargin, Kinsale; Pauline Cargin, Wales; Amanda Moreno, the Royal Irish Fusiliers Museum, Armagh; the National Army Museum, Sandhurst and Chelsea; Tom Burke, the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association, and the National Library.

This article is dedicated to the author's great-uncle, Pvt John Molony of Derrylea, Kildysart, Royal Munster Fusiliers. Aged 21, he was killed on the same day, and in the same sector, as Major John Morrogh was taken prisoner - March 23, 1918.

Buried at St Emilie cemetery, Ronsoy-sur-Somme.

*We shall remember them + Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.*

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