

New research puts conventional theories about Titanic disaster on ice

April 10 2014, by Hannah Postles



Icebergs in eastern Greenland. Credit: Dr Julie Jones.

Academics at the University of Sheffield have dispelled a long-held theory that the Titanic was unlucky for sailing in a year with an exceptional number of icebergs and say the risk of icebergs is actually higher now.

Previously it had been suggested that the seas which sank the famous cruise ship – which set off on its maiden voyage 102 years ago today (Thursday 10 April 2014) – had an exceptional number of icebergs

caused by lunar or solar effects.

But academics at the University have shown the ship wasn't as unlucky as previously thought.

Using data on iceberg locations dating back to 1913 – recorded to help prevent a repeat of the Titanic – they have shown that 1912 was a significant ice year but not extreme.

Professor Grant Bigg who led the research, said: "We have seen that 1912 was a year of raised iceberg hazard, but not exceptionally so in the long term. 1909 recorded a slightly higher number of icebergs and more recently the risk has been much greater – between 1991 and 2000 eight of the ten years recorded more than 700 icebergs and five exceeded the 1912 total."

He added: "As use of the Arctic, in particular, increases in the future with the declining sea-ice the ice hazard will increase in water not previously used for shipping. As [polar ice sheets](#) are increasingly losing mass as well, the iceberg risk is likely to increase in the future, rather than decline."

The [iceberg](#) which sank the Titanic was spotted just before midnight on 14 April 1912 500m away. Despite quick action to slow the ship it wasn't enough and the ship sank in just two and a half hours. The disaster saw 1,517 people perish and only 700 survive.

Provided by University of Sheffield

Citation: New research puts conventional theories about Titanic disaster on ice (2014, April 10) retrieved 20 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-04-conventional-theories-titanic-disaster-ice.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.