

Living in the shadow of 'Titanic'

The Titanic never goes away! For a hundred years relatives of its victims have lived in its shadow and its consequences.



I was born into one of those families in 1932. My grandfather, James Lester, age 39 years old, together with three Davies cousins, age 24, 22 and 17 years, lost their lives in the disaster.

As third class passengers they paid £24/3/0 for their tickets, the 17 year old paid £8/1/0. This money probably represented most of their worldly wealth. Having sold most of their possessions, my grandma now lived with her sister, the mother of the cousins. All hoped to sail to America later.

Five days later my Nan, Alice Lester (age 34) was a widow with a nine year old son my Dad, she had no home – no furniture – no income, a suitcase now held all she possessed. The Titanic experience would affect them both as long as they lived, physically and mentally.

April 1913 the Davies family helped by the Titanic Fund sailed to join their eldest son in America. Their youngest child 'Little Alice' was a dwarf and was not allowed to enter America. (no human rights laws then). My Nan nobly offered to look after little Alice for life, so that the Davies family could emigrate.

Nan now returned to the village near Sedgley where formerly she lived, and with family help rented a small house, but she had little to put in it! Whilst in later years others would make millions telling their version of Titanic's story in films, books, my Nan in 1913 received from the Relief Fund 12/6 each week. 7/6 for herself and 5/- for Dad until he reached 14 years. Every Saturday she walked three miles into the nearest town to collect it, (the tram-fare was 3 pence she couldn't afford. Rent, food and clothes for three people with 12/6 to live on!

To supplement her income she did domestic work at the 'big house' two days a week, working 10 hours a day for 1/9d a day. Her income was now 16 shillings. Life was grim, poverty was relentless, things wouldn't get easier until Dad started work in 1918. In 1920 little Alice died and in 1929 my Mum and Dad married, Nan would now live with them.

The time I spent with Nan would be short, she died in 1939 (age 63) just before I was seven, yet her influence on my life I would only appreciate later. I remember the fun we had with this high spirited lady as she played with us children, it was perhaps, the happiest time of her life! At a very early age she took me to Church, I remember when they sang a certain hymn, we would quietly leave, and walk home. When I asked why she would always reply, "One day you will understand". And I do, to this day Nearer My God to Thee, fills me with a great sadness.

It was the memory of Nan's generous spirit which would be an inspiration to me later, when I struggled with questions of faith. Wherever there were people in trouble or in need my Nan was there. Yet she had so little to give, except her care and loving kindness. In spite of all that life had thrown at her, she was the one to show me 'faith in action' and that faith never wavered. Why does adversity shape and strengthen the faith of some, and completely crush others? I have never found a satisfactory answer to that one.

In 1956 Gladys Davies returned from America to stay six weeks with Mum and Dad, the only one of the Davies family ever to return. It was a very emotional reunion, Dad and Gladys had last played together in 1913 the night before she sailed. It was also a cathartic experience for the family, for the first time Dad talked openly about the disaster, his misery and loss. They talked long into the night Gladys telling us how much they had all missed little Alice, and wished they were back home in England.

Shortly after she returned Gladys died age 58, and a few years later Dad followed, neither living to a great age, both indirectly further victims of the Titanic! The Titanic would impinge upon my life through the years, people would tell me about the grandfather I never knew, whose photograph I do not have, I do not have anything which was his. Only other peoples' memories.

This summer I shall cross the sea to Ireland, see the Titanic's berth and, watch a virtual reality video of Titanic leaving Belfast on its maiden voyage via Southampton to America. Then I shall quietly close the door on the ship which changed the course of my family's life.

Christine Pursehouse (nee Lester)

Dear friends

The Lord watches over all who love Him Psalm 145, v20

Welcome to the Spring Edition of Quebec News. We hope it will inform you of what is happening here at Quebec and show how our residents are enjoying the various events taking place.

It is also good to see a number of them developing their talent in the Art Class. We are most grateful to friends who give of their time and expertise to make this possible.

The Trustees continue to monitor the work and plan for the future here. Our great desire is that the Lords people resident here will experience the best of care and that the love of God may be shown to all who enter our door.

We are thankful to our team both staff and management for their dedication to the work.

Stephen Read, Trustee

Art Group

A recent session of the Art Group demonstrates the creative thought patterns of many residents as the photo shows. Increased numbers attending are an encouragement.



WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING...



Christmas joy

On December 3rd a packed dining room listened to the Salvation Army Singers Christmas programme. Much delight was the order of the day when the tambourines came into play. All enjoyed refreshments and mince pies afterwards.



Cubs, campfire and carols

The William Cowper Cub Pack visited in December. Much laughter ensued when they sang some campfire songs. Carols and a puppet show told the Christmas story.



Top chefs

A treat for Harry on his birthday! Kate Bush, one of our Carer/Cooks, made and decorated a cake in the form of an artist's palette. The Christmas cake, made by our top chefs Kathy Crammer and Johanne Fletcher was the result of much time and effort. Johanne decorated the cake.



Gifted folk

Quebec Hall's very own Art Class, started by the Reverend Phillip Parfitt, meets once a month. A gallery viewing is planned for later this year.

Margaret's efforts

Christmas displays in the stairwell and lounge were all the hard work of member of staff, Margaret Seekings. She dressed the trees and made the doves, all hand painted. *Thank you Margaret!*



A late start

Our Quiz night with fish and chips took place on April 5th. A good time was had by all with the winning team being "The Rebels". Well done to them and to all those who took part.



A big event

Sproston Bell Plate Ringers entertained us on the evening of March 22nd. Over the years their programme has become more varied and enjoyable. The opportunity to "have a go" pleased many.

Easter thoughts

Saturday, 30th March saw many gather together to remember the real meaning of Easter. This annual occasion is always appreciated by many residents and friends alike.

FUTURE EVENTS...

- ★ May 3rd Greek themed evening meal
- ★ June 3rd "Out & About" sing-a-long singing group
- ★ June 12th Afternoon Cream Tea
- ★ July 17th Afternoon Cream Tea



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