

## Lawrence Beesley and Macphairson Clongloketty Angus

by Pat Cook

### ***Titanic Research***

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#### **A progress report on the long awaited Annotated Beesley.**

Some months ago I'm watching television, trying desperately to find something worthwhile on the tube when the phone rang. Hearing Rose Ann, my wife, pick up the receiver in the other room, I continue playing the remote like a fisherman, knowing there HAS to be something out there. Suddenly, she rushed into the back bedroom and stated:

"Nicholas is on the phone!"

I know only one Nicholas and I immediately leapt to my feet (an awesome task for someone of my gravity) and picked up the receiver near the bed.

"Nicholas! What a nice surprise! I thought you'd be in London by now."

"I'm calling from London," he answered. After the usual pleasantries he went on. "I got off without all that material of Lawrence's you sent me. Can you email it to me here?"

The Lawrence he referred to was Lawrence Beesley. Besides being a Titanic Second Class passenger and author of "The Loss of the SS Titanic", Beesley was also Nicholas's grandfather.

"I'll be driving down to Wirksworth tomorrow and I hope to see what I can find," he went on.

"Hang on a sec;," I told him, "and I'll get to my office." I sprinted - make that lumbered down the hall and, on the way, flashed on the trail of events that led to this search.

About a year and a half ago, I was rereading Beesley's book for the umpteenth time. I have been a Titanic researcher for some years now and have literally haunted Phil Hind's Encyclopedia Titanica. Sort of a historic table-hopper, I usually investigated one person's story and invariably this led to another, then another and so on. As I was reading Beesley, I came across his passage which read:

"There were two or three men on deck, and with one - the Scotch engineer who played hymns in the saloon - I compared notes of our experiences."

Ah, that was Douglas Norman, I thought to myself, having literally just read his account on the E. T. web site just days before. Had there been someone else in the room at that time, they would probably have seen the light bulb go off over my head!

Why not write down ALL of Lawrence Beesley's passages relating to unnamed passengers and crew and see if I could find out exactly who these people, in fact, were?! Just as a private project; there probably couldn't be more than twenty or thirty. Two weeks later, I had over two hundred and sixty references and still counting. And along the way, I decided a biography would also be in order.

"Okay, Nicholas," I said into the office receiver, "according to his birth certificate, Lawrence was born in Wirksworth, December 31, 1877. Someplace called Steeple Grange. No number, though."

"I'll see what I can find," he said. We finished up with a few more conversational tidbits and then he hung off, as the Brits say.

As I looked at the certificate, which good friend Phillip Gowan had sent me, I again thought of what I had dug up since the whole project began.

I guess the real gold mine of information began with a note from Gowan, who gave me an address to a Beesley relative - he wasn't sure exactly who the relative was or their relationship to Lawrence. That relative turned out to be a charming lady named Dinah who is Lawrence's step daughter (she was 6 when Beesley married her mother in 1919). In answer to my first tentative letter to her, Dinah wrote back with gracious and generous information about her father, along with a zerox of a hand written letter Lawrence had written to the Fenwicks (passengers on the Carpathia), thanking them for a photograph. From her and a bit of legwork, Lawrence Beesley began to emerge as a studious, spiritual, inquisitive and sports-loving individual.

In 1905, Lawrence became interested in Christian Science and the teachings of Mary Baker Eddy. So much so that, by 1909, he was instructing others in the religion from his rooms on Marylebone Road in London between 9 and 11 am. During this same year he had an article, "The Passing Away of Human Theories," published in the Christian Science Journal. 1911 saw Lawrence, now a widower, living in Regents Park, N. W. where he wrote another article for the Journal entitled "Constancy". It was also in 1911 when Lawrence resigned his position at Dulwich. In 1912 he decided to go on Holiday in the States; and visit a brother, Frank, in Toronto. He booked a Second Class passage on the Titanic; his book eloquently tells that story.

After finishing his book, published by Houghton-Mifflin, Lawrence returned home on the RMS Laconia I; whether by choice or chance, this time he did not sail on a White Star liner but a Cunarder. He remarried in 1919 to Muriel Greenwood (Lawrence called her Mollie;), the couple had three children, (Laurien, Waveney and Hugh) and Lawrence got on with his life. In between his teaching stints, he enjoyed reading detective novels, working crossword puzzles;and golf.

OH, how he loved to play golf! And he was quite good at it, entering the British Open several years running. Indeed, he passed along his love for the game to his children; on several occasions (it is rumored in the family) having them on the links when they should've been in school.

Amid all this, it should be said, he was never far from the shadow of Titanic. Many times you read how catastrophe affects it's survivors, the eloquence of silence or unspoken actions regarding the event tend to speak for themselves. In Lawrence's case, he simply would never go to sea again, not even to cross the English Channel. Years later, according to one daughter, the singular time the family went to the beach, Lawrence sat with his back to the water.

During a convention in New York with other Titanic researchers, I was discussing Beesley and his various annotations with Senan Molony, author of "The Irish Aboard Titanic". I brought up Beesley's passage:

"#133;while "in and out and roundabout" went a Scotchman with his bagpipes playing something that Gilbert says #145;faintly resembles an air#146;."

This, of course, was Eugene Patrick Daly, playing "Erin#146;s Lament" on his uileann, or #145;elbow#146; pipes - a fact Molony had sent me months before. #145;Gilbert#146; referred to William Gilbert of the operetta writing team of Gilbert and Sullivan.

"Why don#146;t you run that phrase #145;Faintly resembles an air#146; online and see what turns up," Molony suggested. "Follow it up, man, follow it up!" he said in his best reporter#146;s tones. As always, his was good advice. When I returned home, I did just that. After locating a Gilbert and Sullivan web site, I ran a search for just that lyric. Up came this:

"Macphairson ClongLocketty Angus, my lad

Lawrence also had an ear for music, at least for Gilbert and Sullivan anyway. And so the search continues, On slips of paper, napkins, notepads and diskettes. And Mr. Beesley leads the way.

### **Acknowledgments:**

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