

Titanic Victim's Funeral

Southend Standard

Thursday 16 May 1912

Pathetic Ceremony at Liverpool.

Impressive Scenes at the Funeral of Steward Lawrence.

A funeral unique in the history of Liverpool was solemnised at the West Derby Cemetery, on Monday, when the body of Arthur Lawrence, one of the victims of the Titanic disaster, and of late a resident of Rochford, Essex was buried. By special request of the relatives of the deceased, the interment was of a quiet character. The Rev. W. H. Harper officiated, and the chief mourners were: Mrs. Lawrence, the widow, Mr. Charles Lawrence, brother and other relatives, and shipmate Wright, the latter being one of the steward's who survived the wreck.

In conversation with one of the relatives, a Standard representative was informed that the body had been picked up by the United States Government steamer Mackay Bennett, about 200 miles from the scene of the disaster. It was taken to Halifax, embalmed, and then transferred to Boston, and brought to Liverpool by the SS Arabic on Friday, and there placed in the private mortuary of Messrs. W. J. Rimmer, Ltd., the undertakers, who had the funeral arrangements in hand.

The American casket in which the body had been brought to Liverpool was enclosed in a polished oak coffin with brass fittings, which bore the inscription: "Arthur Lawrence, died 15th April, 1912, aged 34 years".

The funeral procession started from the mortuary and comprised the hearse and four coaches. A sympathetic crowd gathered in the vicinity of the mortuary, hats were raised and women wept as the cortege slowly left the premises and wended its way the three or four miles to the West Derby Cemetery. There another crowd had gathered to do honour to the memory of the Titanic victim. As the clergyman solemnly intoned the funeral service the scene was most impressive. Pathetic figures in the church were three of the deceased's widow and sisters. Attired in sombre black and weeping bitterly they drew the heartfelt sympathy of all present.

Among the many wreaths which covered the coffin there was none more pathetic than that bearing the inscription, "His broken hearted wife". There were many other wreaths including those from the Masonic society.

The procession from the church to the grave was made amidst a downpour of rain from leaden skies. At the graveside, when the clergyman had intoned the last words over the dead, the Masonic brethren observed the ritual of their order, the most prominent feature of which was the singing of "Days and Moments.". Then, with a last look at the coffin, those present quietly took their seats in the waiting coaches and were driven to the Lancashire and Yorkshire station to take the train to Freshfields, where the widow was staying with her brother.

A touching scene was witnessed at the railway station. The porters and persons on the platform raised their hats and stood bareheaded whilst the mourners made their way onto the train.

To a Standard representative the survivor Wright made a lucid statement of the disaster as it had happened to him. He was off duty and in his berth when the collision occurred. The shock of the impact awakened him. At first, like many others on board, he did not realise the seriousness of the position, but he went on deck and was ordered into boat Number 13, there to take an oar and assist in sailing the seventy persons the boat contained. For five hours the party were in this perilous position, and the cries of the drowning fell on their ears. "It was an experience," said Mr. Wright, "such as I could never have imagined, and one that I hope never to have again to go through. it was a black night, and so cold that it felt like being in an iceberg. It was about break of day when on the horizon, we sighted the headlights of the Carpathia. Never was there so welcome a sight. Of course, we did not know what vessel she was, but we did know that she meant salvation for us. Even at this hour, when we realised that rescue was at hand and that the frail craft in which we had pulled from the wreck was to be exchanged for the security of a liner's deck, we had no idea that so many lives had gone. We lost everything, and I looked a regular wreck when we reached New York."

Mr. Wright mentioned that whilst he had not known Lawrence intimately, the had been shipmates for about five years and they were together in the Olympic when she collided with HMS Hawke. Lawrence, he describes as a quiet conscientious worker, one ever ready to do his utmost not only for the comfort of the passengers, but for the welfare of his fellow shipmates. Mr. Wright was evidently deeply affected by the loss of his brother steward.

["Mr. Wright" might refer to William Wright (Glory Hole Steward)]is.?

Courtesy of Brian Ticehurst

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