

# Leader2

Saturday April 14 2012

**The cult of Lowry** Patricia Feehily says stop slamming politicians that aren't convicted of any wrongdoing >>P3



**Up for the challenge** Over the May Bank Holiday a local theatre group will attempt to create and stage four plays in 24 hours >>P4

**Affordable luxury** Spring fashions that have the 'Swiss factor' arrive in Limerick >>P20

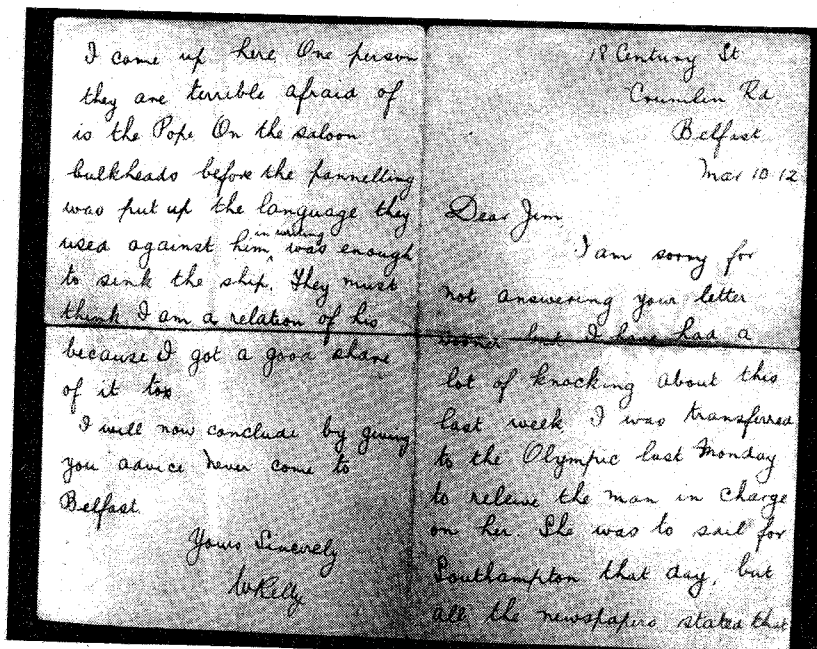


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# Titanic struggle to survive

Sixteen people from Limerick boarded the Titanic a century ago this week, writes **Anne Sheridan** - only six of them survived

**T**HE CRIES that came from the ship I'll never forget. Nellie O'Dwyer, 26, from Limerick, had been saved. She was one of the lucky ones - after being one of the last to climb in to lifeboat number 10. Some people, she said, were helped into them; others were "almost thrown in". "Do you know, we still had no notion the ship was going down?" They were afraid to get into the boats - the very things that would save them. The looks on the faces of the crew, as they helped in them the boats, puzzled them. They would later realise it was a possible look of envy that they had a chance to escape, when others were pushed back because of their class, or forced to stay back because of duty. They knew they would go down with the ship. In the early hours of April 15, 1912, Nellie



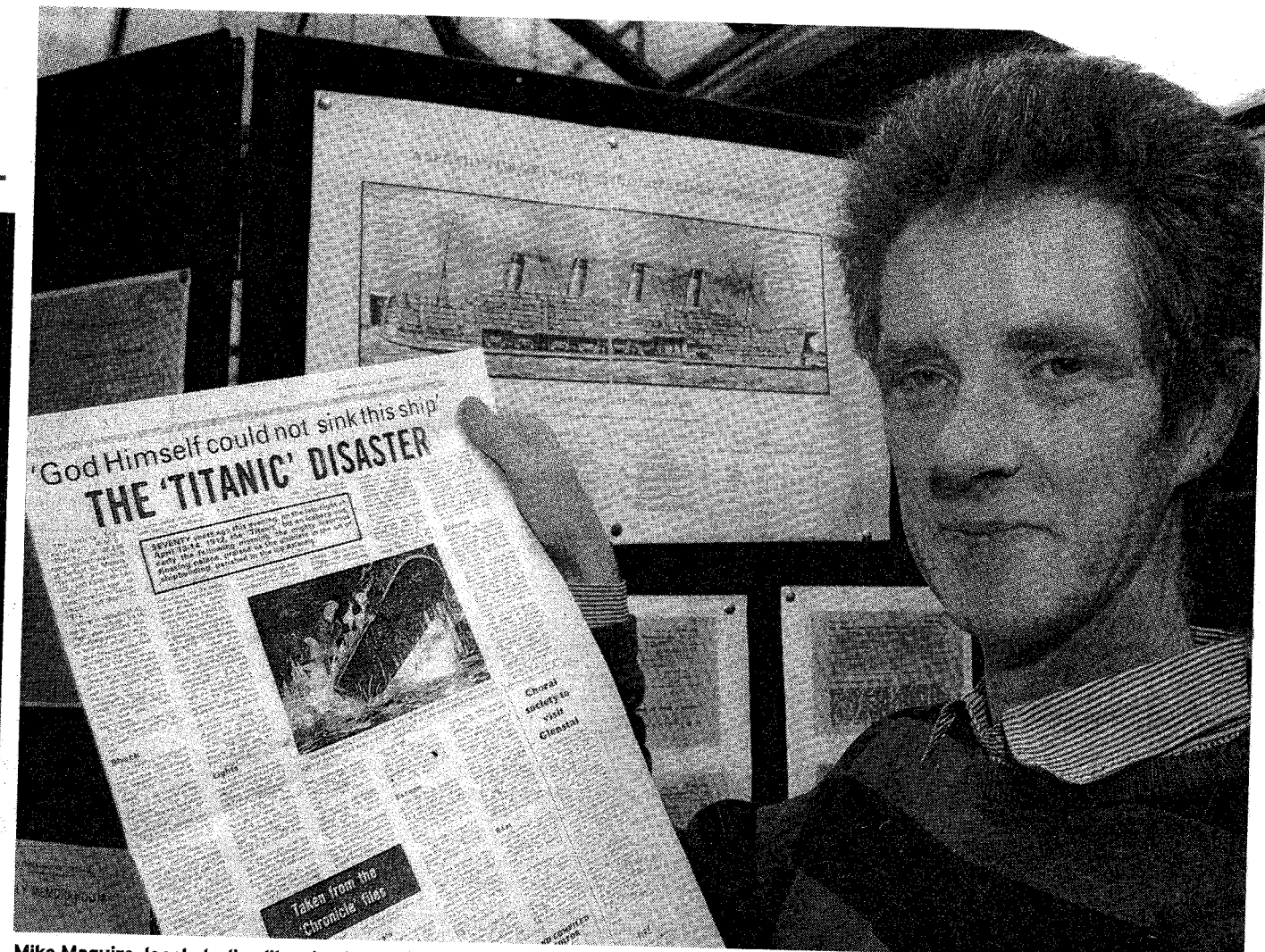
Letters from the Titanic, sent by an engineer who died in the tragedy, have only come to light this week in Limerick after being kept private for nearly a century

watched as others were plunged to their deaths. Sitting out in the middle of the Atlantic in minus degree temperatures she

saw dim images of women and children still left on the ship. Irrespective of class, creed, age and race, in the end there were only

two categories of people as the Titanic sank - the drowned and the saved.

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Mike Maguire, local studies librarian in the City Library, shows a report from the Limerick Chronicle at their Titanic exhibition



# Titanic hopes for a new life lost at sea

Continued from page 1

➔ "Towards morning we rowed over the place where the Titanic went down, but there were only pieces of wreckage floating, except the new lifebelts that poor souls had adjusted the wrong way before they left the ship," she later told the Brooklyn Daily Times.

In all, at least 16 people from Limerick boarded the Titanic at Cobh (then known as Queenstown) in Cork on April 11. It set sail at 1.30pm as the song Erin's Lament was played, never to reach its intended destination.

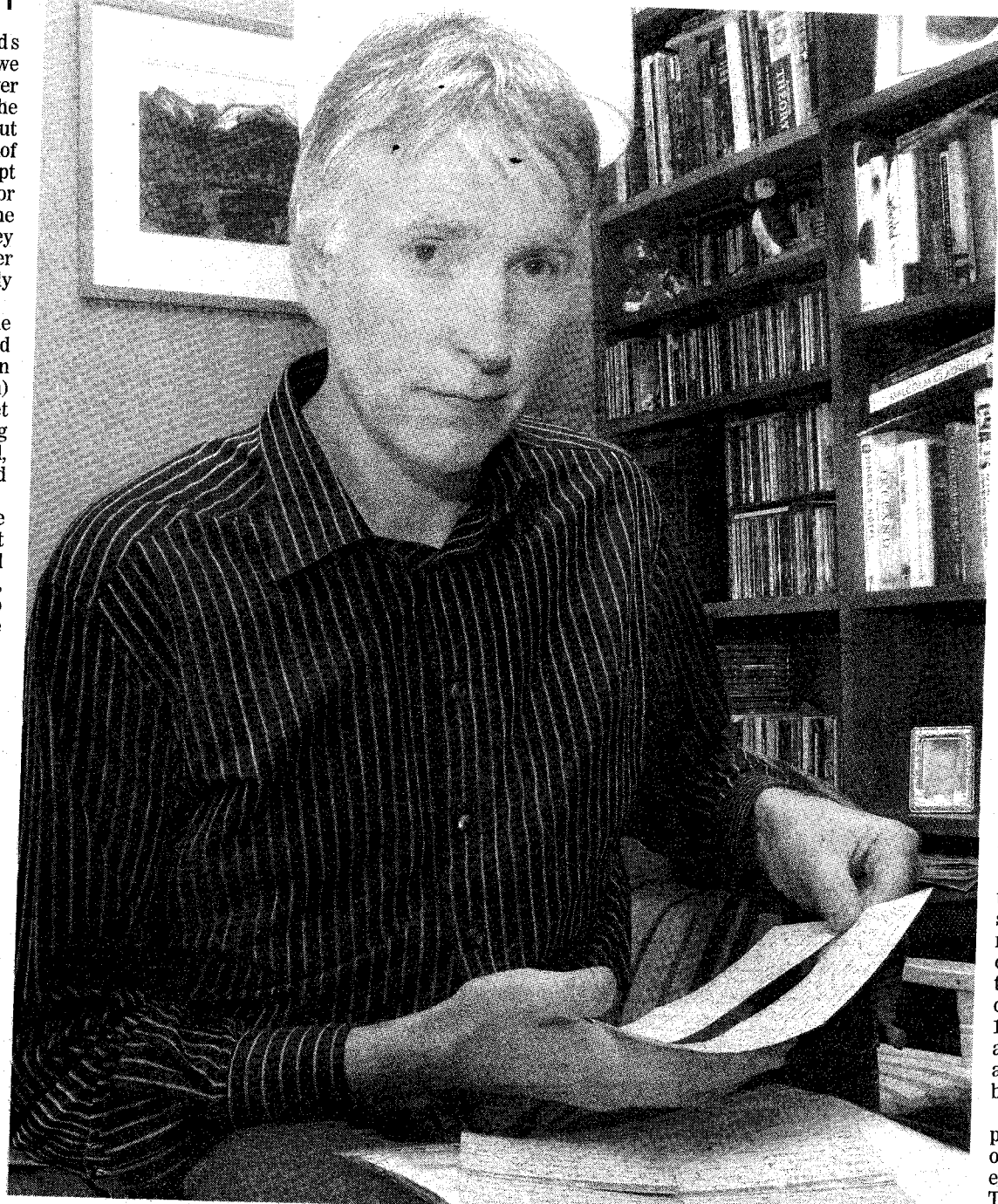
For many the choice to board this ship wasn't even theirs to make—it had been thrust upon them, after the Cymric failed to sail four days earlier due to a coal strike.

The Titanic, the so-called 'ship of dreams', would be their next available opportunity to start a new life. Instead of touching the soil in the land of opportunity, for 10 of those from Limerick who boarded, their bodies fell to the bottom of the ocean, along with all their worldly possessions.

From Rathkeale to the Plaza in New York, on board the most luxurious liner in the world, it was a transition too good to be true. But many had hoped to make that epic leap from the backroads of county Limerick to the greatest city in the world. It was never meant to be.

They were destined for the Plaza - like James Scanlan, 21, a farm labourer from Rathkeale, who wanted to join his sister Kate in the Big Apple.

Others from Limerick were making their way to Park Avenue, Brooklyn, the Bronx, Chicago, Quebec, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. They dreamed hard and worked hard to



Architect Hugh Kelly, North Circular Road, reveals letters posted by his grand-uncle William Kelly, an engineer on the Titanic, which he had posted home from Southampton, on his first and last voyage at sea

went out.

Those on board - nearly all steerage passengers - were aged between 16 to 46. In the county, they hailed from Abbeyfeale, Lough Gur, Askeaton, Rathkeale, Pallasgreen, Castlemore, Broadford,

passengers had a 97% rate of being saved.

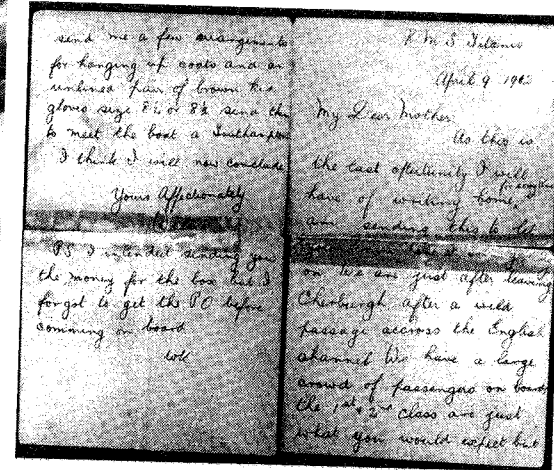
Their last supper comprised of roast beef with brown gravy, sweetcorn, boiled potatoes, rice, soup, plum pudding with sweet sauce,

paid just £8 for their fare, in comparison to thousands paid for the privilege of boarding first class, endured a greater nightmare.

The bodies of all those from Limerick who died at

in Limerick gave the hall and his staff free of charge to a committee in charge of fundraising for the Titanic's victims, especially the families left behind.

The outpouring of



'My dear mother': Engineer William Kelly poignantly notes this will be his last opportunity to write

to their families - days after the disaster.

The Limerick Chronicle on April 18 notes the "providential escape of Clare passengers" on its front page. It states: "Patrick Tracey, Cratloe, and Daniel and Mary Sullivan, on booking passages on Titanic at the office of Mr Michael Ryan, Sarsfield Street, changed their minds, deciding to wait for the Titanic's second trip, which had been fixed for May 2nd."

In the days after the tragedy, details of survivors were scant and names were often confused or mixed-up. A report in the Limerick Chronicle, dated Tuesday, April 16, 1912, states: "Details of the accident are very meagre and have all come to hand by wireless telegraphy."

Alongside this front page report, were reports of the Home Rule Bill, even reaction from Cape Town in South Africa, and the 'weekly cattle sale'. Life carried on.

But the Titanic would dominate the front pages of this newspaper and others for weeks to come, as news slowly came through of those both dead and alive.

The Limerick Leader followed on Friday evening, April 19, with

Star company's head offices in Liverpool.

"Further list of Titanic passengers survivors includes name Nellie O'Dwyer. Complete list, however, not yet to hand. - Ismay."

The sender of the telegram in question was J. Bruce Ismay, the White Star's managing director, who joined a lifeboat, leaving the paying customers and the Atlantic to decide their fate.

"The news of her [Nellie's] safety will be received generally by her people and the citizens generally with joy and gratification," continued the report.

Mr Moloney, in his book, rightly questions why we still hanker after this ship. "If we look closely at the Titanic, we can also see ourselves, not in how we enviously hope to be, but in how are Everyone can project themselves into the desperate dilemma of that night and how they might have acted," he writes.

Fintan O'Toole, assistant editor of The Irish Times, wrote last weekend: "The very grandeur of the ship was a provocative challenge to God's monopoly on creation ... The disaster

## Fate of the survivors

**Nellie O'Dwyer**, 26, from High Street  
(Fate unknown)

**Nora Keane, (PICTURED)**  
46, Castleconnell  
(Died in Limerick in 1944, aged 78, due to complications from a broken leg)



**John Kennedy**, 20, Watergate  
(Died of anthrax poisoning in 1918, aged 25, during the First World War when he was drafted into the US Army)

**Margaret Madigan**, 21, Askeaton  
(Died aged 88, in New Jersey)

**Bertha Moran**, 28, Askeaton  
(Died on the 49th anniversary of the sinking in 1961 in Detroit)

**Hannah O'Brien**, 26, Pallasgreen  
(Died in New York during the flu epidemic in 1918)

after Titanic. The backdrop of mass emigration amongst the young after the Famine is mirrored today albeit in an altered context. These were ordinary Limerick people from hard-working, often poor backgrounds going to extraordinary lengths to build a better life. They never got there, and the real stories of their fate might never possibly be realised, in spite of the reams of newspaper print, books and films dedicated to this enduring subject. The story of the Titanic is simply too irresistible to let it finally rest in peace.

The Limerick people who boarded carried the hopes of generations with them.

For some love was their guide. Thomas and Hannah O'Brien, both

to sail on the Cymric on Easter Sunday.

It is said that the couple were married by a priest in Limerick - after love blossomed just a few months previously - but no official records of their union exist.

For some it was only by the grace of God that they made it to a lifeboat, like Nora Keane, pictured above, whose struggle with her corset nearly cost her her life.

Others knelt down on the deck and prayed, like 16 year-old Patrick Lane from the city, who was never seen again thereafter.

Nellie O'Dwyer was asked by his parents James and Margaret to look after him, but struggled to do so as their living quarters were so far apart on the vast ship.



For many the choice to board this ship wasn't even theirs to make - it had been thrust upon them, after the Cymric failed to sail four days earlier due to a coal strike.

The Titanic, the so-called 'ship of dreams', would be their next available opportunity to start a new life. Instead of touching the soil in the land of opportunity, for 10 of those from Limerick who boarded, their bodies fell to the bottom of the ocean, along with all their worldly possessions.

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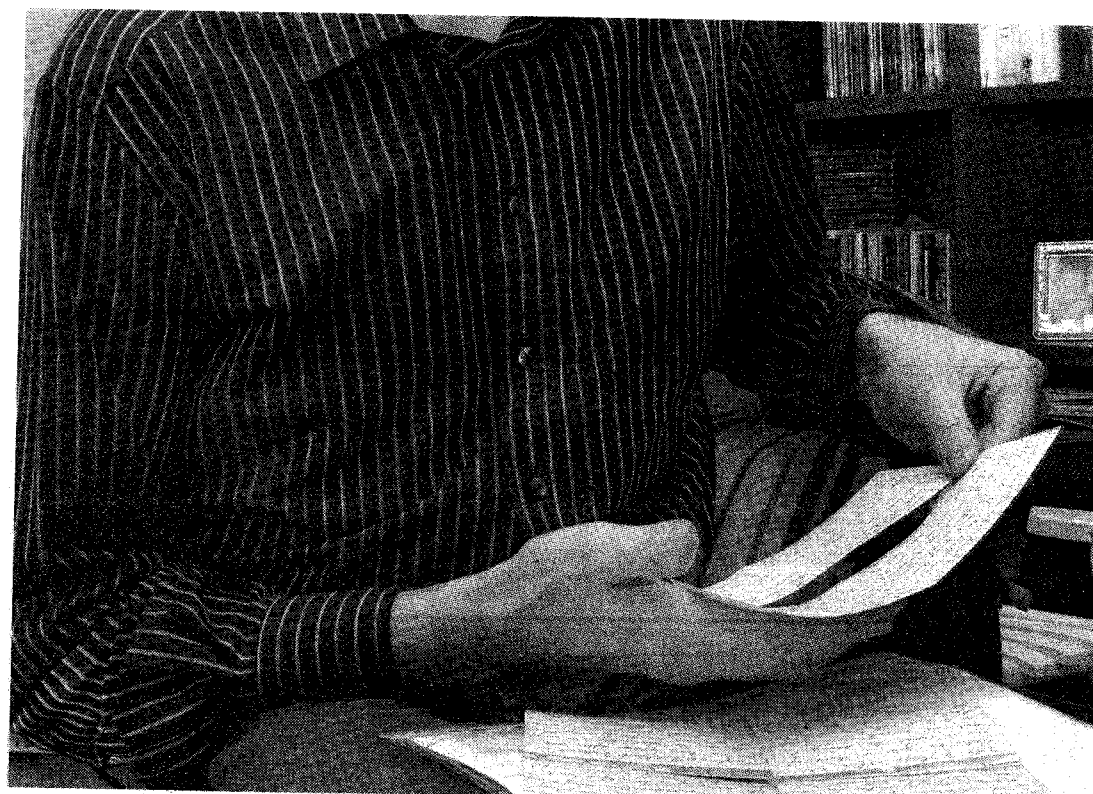
They were destined for the Plaza - like James Scanlan, 21, a farm labourer from Rathkeale, who wanted to join his sister Kate in the Big Apple.

Others from Limerick were making their way to Park Avenue, Brooklyn, the Bronx, Chicago, Quebec, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. They dreamed hard and worked hard to pay for their fares.

The hundreds - in some cases even thousands of pounds - were lost, along with personal effects such as Irish lace, Limerick hams and bottles, of whiskey.

Brothers and sisters had sent for them, waiting eagerly on the other side.

But their dreams died heavy with them, among the screams of thousands in the dark hours when Titanic's lights finally



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went out.

Those on board - nearly all steerage passengers - were aged between 16 to 46. In the county, they hailed from Abbeyfeale, Lough Gur, Askeaton, Rathkeale, Pallasgreen, Castleconnell, Broadford, and Mount Plummer, and in the city they travelled from Watergate, Clare Street and High Street.

But all were either second or third class passengers, and the odds of survival were not in their favour.

A woman in third class had a 50-50 chance of being saved. By contrast, just one in eight of second class women were 'lost', while first class female

passengers had a 97% rate of being saved.

Their last supper comprised of roast beef with brown gravy, sweetcorn, boiled potatoes, rice, soup, plum pudding with sweet sauce, biscuits, fresh bread and fruit. It was an array of food they might not have enjoyed back in their native county, but it was a world apart from the lavishness in first class, with oysters, salmon, lamb, pate de foie gras, and much more.

Just a few hours later - at 2am that Sunday morning - they would all experience the horror of the sinking.

Yet those who had

paid just £8 for their fare, in comparison to thousands paid for the privilege of boarding first class, endured a greater nightmare.

The bodies of all those from Limerick who died at sea were never recovered, with the exception of Thomas Morgan, who was believed to be from Limerick though listed as living in Southampton in official records. His remains are among hundreds buried in Halifax in Canada.

While he is listed as being from Limerick in Senan Molony's definitive account of 'The Irish aboard Titanic', there is no substantiation to this link. His name, however, is included among a list on the front page of the Limerick Chronicle on April 18, 1912.

When the 26 year-old - or No. 302 as he was referred to in official records - was pulled from the sea, he was found with a scar on his left wrist, and was wearing a blue coat and dark pants. He was wearing no boots or socks, and had a crucifix in his pocket. Apart from the manner of his death, nothing else about him is known.

In the aftermath of the disaster, the owner of the Theatre Royal

in Limerick gave the hall and his staff free of charge to a committee in charge of fundraising for the Titanic's victims, especially the families left behind.

The outpouring of grief was huge, and the public fascination with the disaster continues 100 years on, and grows even stronger this centenary week as 'new' stories come to light from descendants of those on that fateful voyage.

In Limerick city library, library assistant Liam Hogan said it's hard not to get absorbed in the minutiae of this period of history.

The library, at the Granary, Michael Street, is now holding a public display of documents relating to the Limerick connection to the Titanic.

But Mr Hogan will also be tweeting events as they happened in the run up to the sailing, and its aftermath, throughout this week on the Twitter site, @Limerick1912, which traces life in Limerick 100 years ago, day by day, as events happened.

Local accounts from that period - printed in the Limerick Leader and sister newspaper Limerick Chronicle - reveal the trickle of information coming home by telegrams

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It revealed that the American Consul in Limerick had received a telegram from the White

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Fintan O'Toole, assistant editor of The Irish Times, wrote last weekend: "The very grandeur of the ship was a provocative challenge to God's monopoly on creation ... The disaster was thus a drowning of the vanities, a living sermon on the follies of progress, of pretension, of self-love."

There are countless reasons why we 'hanker'

after Titanic. The backdrop of mass emigration amongst the young after the Famine is mirrored today albeit in an altered context. These were ordinary Limerick people from hard-working, often poor backgrounds going to extraordinary lengths to build a better life. They never got there, and the real stories of their fate might never possibly be realised, in spite of the reams of newspaper print, books and films dedicated to this enduring subject. The story of the Titanic is simply too irresistible to let it finally rest in peace.

The Limerick people who boarded carried the hopes of generations with them.

For some love was their guide. Thomas and Hannah O'Brien, both aged 26, from Pallasgreen, had 'eloped', while she was two months pregnant. She survived and gave birth to a daughter Marion, but Thomas died at sea. They too had originally booked

to sail on the Cymric on Easter Sunday.

It is said that the couple were married by a priest in Limerick - after love blossomed just a few months previously - but no official records of their union exist.

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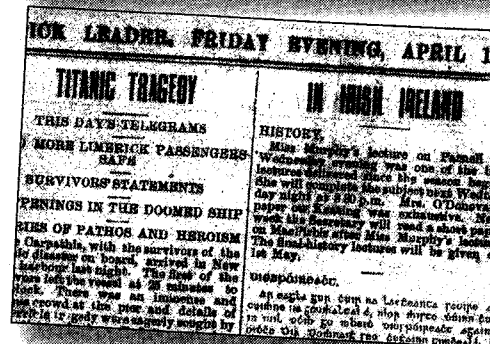
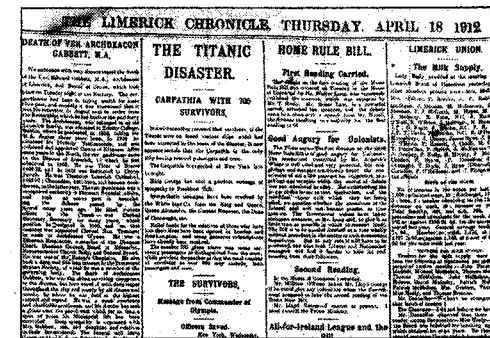
As the ship went down, she swore the band player 'Nearer, My God, to Thee', in spite of conflicting accounts.

"I never heard the ship's band playing louder."

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## Limerick deaths on the Titanic

Patrick Lane, 16, Clare Street  
Thomas Morgan, 26, Limerick/Southampton  
James Scanlan, 21, Rathkeale  
Patrick Ryan, 29, Askeaton  
Daniel Moran, 27, Askeaton  
Patrick Dooley, 38, Lough Gur  
Patrick Colbert, 24, Abbeyfeale  
Joseph Foley, 19, Mountplummer  
Bridget O'Sullivan, 21, Broadford (pictured)  
Thomas O'Brien, 26, Pallasgreen

