



Open Agenda

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ADDERGOOLE'S UNIQUE AND POIGNANT COMMEMORATION

Ringling of historic bell will mark sinking of Titanic

IN just over two weeks' time, a unique, memorable, poignant event takes place in a small north Mayo village.

At 2.20 a.m. on Wednesday, April 15, the historic Timoney Bell will peal out from the grounds of St. Patrick's Church, Lahardane. It will ring out for 25 minutes - in memory of the 14 people from Addergoole Parish who were aboard the Titanic when it sank exactly 97 years earlier.

There will be two slow knells for each of the 11 lost - three joyous minutes for the survivors who were saved.

As Dr. Paul Nolan, a leading member of the Addergoole Titanic Society, puts it: "Addergoole is unique. It is the only location across Europe that we know of where the sinking of the Titanic is acknowledged by the ringing of a lonely church bell in the dead of night. It's the big bell that's now silent for the rest of the year and few hear it on April 15."

"We have done it each year since the memorial to the Addergoole 14 was erected in the church back in 2002." The ageing bell otherwise remains silent and still. Its rusting metal

spoke structures with its archaic wheel-like supports so suggestive of a bygone steam engine era remain a reflection of its dominant role in previous societies.

The church bell was erected in the late 1940s, funded by Michael Timoney, of the great early 20th century Irish philanthropist and scholar.

His noble idea at that time was that the ringing of the ornate bell in its elaborate metal framework would be heard daily on three main occasions, to call the faithful to morning Mass and evening devotions, and also at noon for the Angelus. And so it did ring out over the mountains, over the valleys and even across the broad expanse of Lough Conn. For many years this was the traditional sound across many rural Irish areas.

Lahardane, a small little-known rural village in Mayo, has a most unique claim to fame.

Namely, that from here in early April 1912, 14 residents set

out together to catch a steam ship, a transatlantic liner from Cobh to the new and exciting American world.

They fatefully boarded the new age phenomenon of their time, RMS Titanic, at Queens-town (Cobh) on April 11, 1912, and set sail for New York on that bright eventful afternoon.

Only 113 steerage passengers had boarded at Queenstown, 12 per

Carpathia. They eventually arrived in New York some four days later.

It was one of the great peace-time catastrophes of the 20th century and has been frequently remembered in so many ways. The name Titanic has gone down in history literally as reference to a great and dreadful disaster, man's greatest maritime invention at that time became but a

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cent were from Addergoole. Their ship of dreams would soon become a ship of demons.

On April 15, 1912, at 2.20 a.m., the Titanic, having struck an iceberg some three hours and 20 minutes earlier, slipped under the black icy waters of the north Atlantic, leaving over 1,500 people to drown.

Eleven of our 14 Lahardanians perished (78 per cent); three miraculously survived, getting onto lifeboats, and being picked up just after 4 a.m. by the

crippled toy out on the ocean left to its fate.

Paul Nolan recalls how the bell ringing started: "For the 11 who drowned, 0.3 per cent of the parish, and the three survivors, remarkably, there were few commemorations in their native parish. There are a variety of obscure reasons for this."

"However, 90 years later, in the year 1992, in the early hours of the morning at 2.20 a.m. the church bell in Lahardane, silent for over

20 years, pealed away for 25 minutes in the dark of the early morning. There was heavy rain, wind and sleet, in keeping with the sinking of the Titanic."

The Addergoole Titanic Society, formed in 2001, decided to commemorate the sinking of the Titanic and the dreadful loss of so many young lives by tolling the Timoney Bell annually at the exact time the Titanic sank.

In April 2002 the society erected a memorial in the church next to the spot where the baptismal font once stood.

As the bell tolls for that lonely half-hour in the dark of the early morning across the deserted village street of Lahardane, over the barren windswept slopes of Nephin and across the empty dark waters of Lough Conn, the custom is a solitary significant reminder of the passing of time and the ending of lives.

The dead of the Titanic may have disappeared into the dark waters of the north Atlantic, but they are still recalled by the tolling of a bell in the silence and emptiness across mountains and plains in west Mayo.



The names of the people from Addergoole Parish who died on the Titanic are inscribed on this plaque on the wall of Lahardane Church.