



Tarn to Titanic: Life & Times of Joseph Bell Chief Engineer

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History is where we have come from, and this biography of Joseph Bell and his roots in Farlam, Cumberland, attempts to discover the life of a man of great courage and human endeavour in his part of the eventual tragedy of the sinking of RMS Titanic, on the 15th of April 1912.

Joseph Bell had a significant role, with his fellow Engineers, in the saving of so many lives as a consequence of their heroism and bravery on that tragic night. After 101 years, this largely untold story of such a remarkable figure of 19th century history needs and deserves to be more amply known. His early life in Cumberland, known now as Cumbria, was very influential in his life for what was to be such an extraordinary and successful career in the Merchant Marine.

His Memorial gravestone in St Thomas a Becket Churchyard, Farlam, Cumbria, is annotated with the following:

NO GREATER LOVE HATH MAN THAN THIS.
THAT A MAN LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS

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Introduction

History is where we have come from, and this biography of Joseph Bell and his roots in Farlam, Cumberland, attempts to portray a man of great courage and human endeavour for his part in the tragedy of the sinking of RMS Titanic, on The 15th April 1912. Joseph Bell had a significant role, with his fellow Engineers, in the saving of many lives as a consequence of their joint heroism and bravery on that night. After a hundred years this largely untold story of a remarkable figure of the 19th century, deserves to be more amply known. His early life in Farlam, Cumberland, now known as Cumbria, was influential on his life for what was to be his future Merchant Marine career.

The Bell families were Yeoman farmers in Farlam, Cumberland, and Joseph Bell was born at home in Farlam House, in April 1861. Being a first child, he was named after both his grandfather and great grandfather who had been farmers there from the 17th century.

In 1881 Joseph Bell left Mr Harrison's Academy in Carlisle, at the age of 15, and was apprenticed as an engine fitter at R & H Stephenson & Company Shipyard in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. George Stephenson was a regular visitor to the Thompson family of Farlam Hall, where the Thompson's collieries were established along the fell side and were serviced by railways that had been developed with the Stephensons. The Rocket of Stephenson fame was used here, and must have been a fascinating and curious subject to young Joseph who may have seen this to be, a much more interesting future for himself than continuing on the family farm.

Having completed his apprenticeship in Newcastle Joseph, in 1883, entered the service of the Mercantile Marine sailing under the flag of the Liverpool & River Plate Steam Navigation Company. They employed him for two years, and then later in 1885, Joseph began his career with the White Star Line serving on some eighteen ships beginning with RMS Oceanic and eventually the Titanic, covering a period of 1885 to his death 1912.

His memorial gravestone in St Thomas a Becket Churchyard, Farlam, Cumbria is annotated with the following:

JOSEPH BELL AGED 51 YEARS SON OF THE
ABOVE MARGARET BELL CHIEF ENGINEER OF
THE SS TITANIC WHO WAS LOST WITH ALL
HIS ENGINEERING STAFF IN THE FOUNDERING
OF THAT VESSEL IN THE ATLANTIC OCEAN
AFTER COLLISION WITH AN ICEBERG
APRIL 12TH 1912

**“NO GREATER LOVE HATH MAN THAN THIS.
THAT A MAN LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR
HIS FRIENDS”**