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New Titanic claims blame Dalbeattie man

Dec 15 2011 by Andrew McNair, Galloway News

A SON of Dalbeattie could have prevented the world's worst maritime disaster.

William Murdoch, first officer on the ill-fated Titanic, might have saved the "unsinkable" passenger liner had he taken immediate action when an iceberg was spotted.

Instead, according to a new book, Murdoch delayed for 30 seconds, analysing information coming his way.

And that delay, the researchers who wrote "Report into the Loss of the SS Titanic: A Centennial Reappraisal" claim, meant the ship was unable to avoid the collision that ended with more than 1,500 people losing their lives.

It's being seen as a second slight against Murdoch and has not gone down well in the town.

Reaction at the community council this week was typical.

It was summed-up by chairperson Erica Johnson who said: "It sank and we can't do anything about it.

"We all know it was because the ship was going too fast."

And the town has vowed to push on with their 2012 festival celebrating its connection with the ship.

The book is due to be published next year.

Eleven leading Titanic researchers have pooled their findings and come up with the claim.

They cite an incident which allegedly happened nine years earlier when Murdoch did not alter course as a ship passed in front of the vessel he was in charge of, the Arabic.

A collision was only narrowly avoided.

Erica Johnson added: "The claims may very well be true but it doesn't change what happened.

"For a small town boy he did awfully well for himself getting into that position, being in charge of a ship like that."

Dalbeattie was also enraged when James Cameron's movie Titanic was released.

It portrayed Murdoch as a money grabber who ended up shooting himself as the ship went down.

Eye witnesses at the time told how Murdoch had given up his life jacket to help others before perishing in the disaster.

Plans for next year's festival are now taking shape with some events already booked.

A themed fancy dress charity ball will take place at the Easterbrook Hall in Dumfries on April 20.

Guests will be encouraged to wear Edwardian dress and organisers have even been given permission to use the famous White Star Liners logo.

Other events already organised include a church service on April 14 followed by a wreath laying at the town's commemorative plaque.

More plans mooted include a lantern parade, a Titanic walk and dropping rose petals into the River Urr to be taken out to sea in memory of all the souls lost nearly 100 years ago.

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