

## Wakefield and the Titanic disaster

It seems that only one victim of the sinking of the Titanic on the night of 14-15 April 1912 had any significant Wakefield connection. The great journalist William Thomas Stead (1849-1912) who was the son of a Congregational minister, was educated at Silcoates School, Wrenthorpe, Wakefield, from 1861 to 1863. Stead, a pioneer of investigative journalism, was the editor of *The Northern Echo* from 1871 and *The Pall Mall Gazette* from 1883. At the time of the disaster, he was on his way to New York to give a talk on world peace.

Sermons at Wakefield's churches and chapels on the Sunday following news of the fate of the Titanic focused the disaster. An editorial in *The Wakefield Express* of 20 April commented 'the best that science and human skill can do is of little avail against the forces of nature though it will be a fair subject for inquiry when the official investigation is held whether, with a desire to make a quicker passage, undue risk was taken'.

The Sherwood family, proprietors of Wakefield's Empire (Kirkgate) and Theatre Royal and Opera House (Westgate) raised £63 for the Lord Mayor of London's disaster fund from collections at their theatres at the end of April. The Wakefield Permanent Orchestra gave a concert in the Empire on 12 May to raise funds for a memorial to the Titanic musicians.

It was a former Wakefield man, Thomas Batty, who initiated the concert in London's Albert Hall in June for the disaster fund.

Sources issues of *The Wakefield Express*, [www.attackingthediabol.co.uk/titanic/victims.php](http://www.attackingthediabol.co.uk/titanic/victims.php)

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