

One more Titanic plus another sinking survivor

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Following Epsom and Ewell Times story on George Pelham, who survived the Titanic disaster and another ship sinking, local writer and historian **Martin Knight** tells us the story of another Titanic double-sinking survivor, buried in our Borough:

Few will be aware of Ewell's connection to the most famous maritime disaster of all time in which 1,514 people perished on RMS Titanic. Mary Kezia Humphries was born in Liverpool in 1870. In 1912 she was living in Nottingham with her husband David Roberts, who was the proprietor of the West Bridgford Motor Company. Mary joined the historic ship as a stewardess in 1st class and was rescued in lifeboat 11 as the boat was swallowed by the North Atlantic Ocean after colliding with an iceberg on the night of 15 April 1912.

Her husband and children experienced a torrid few days without knowing whether Mary had survived the tragedy or not and it was only after she was deposited by the Carpathian in New York that word finally reached home. However, the experience did not deter Mary from going back to sea, and in 1914 she was working again aboard the Rohilla when that ship went down in the North Sea. Mary told her family that the rescue from the Rohilla, a ship that was built in Belfast by Harland & Wolf like the Titanic, was a far more frightening ordeal than the one two years earlier. The sea was eerily calm when the Titanic sunk and if you were lucky enough to get into a lifeboat you were relatively safe but conditions were far more treacherous with the Rohilla. Eighty-five lives were lost. Mary is thought to be the only survivor of both disasters.

At some point Mary and David opted for a quieter life and settled in Ewell. Mary died in 1932 and her husband David was tragically killed in a motorcycle accident just a year later. They are buried together along with their daughters Daisy Bell and Kezia Nora in St Mary's Churchyard.

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