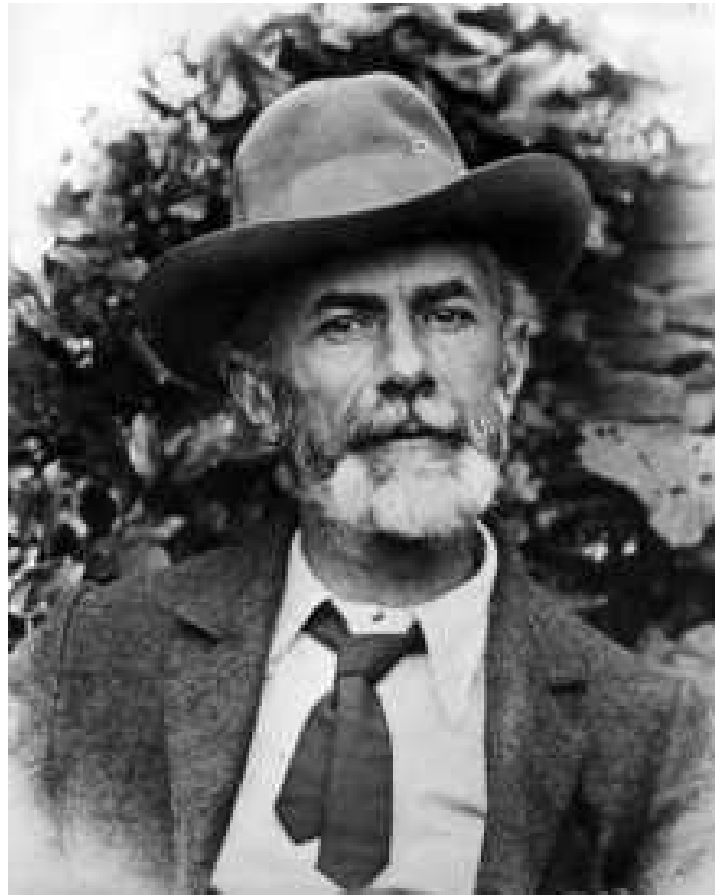




NEWSLETTER November/December 2017



Edward Carpenter (1844-1929)

A talk by Suzanne Bingham

Carpenter, a socialist, poet and supporter of the working classes, was well known in Chesterfield speaking on subjects as diverse as women's suffrage and astronomy.

Tuesday November 21st 7:30pm. United Reformed Church. Rose Hill

Volunteers wanted

All copies of the *Journal* produced earlier this year have been sold. Reprints can be ordered, price £2.50. Now we are looking for contributors for the next edition to be produced early next year. Would you like to tell us about any research you have been doing at the Christmas meeting? Or how about a short piece for the *Newsletter*?

SURVIVORS OF THE SINKING OF THE *TITANIC*.

Janet Murphy

Those of us present at the April meeting will remember the story of Vera Britten, survivor of the sinking of the *Titanic* and the *Britannic*. We were not aware that one of the other stewardesses had connections with Chesterfield and she was said to be well known in the town.

Evelyn Marsden was the daughter of Walter Marsden who had emigrated to Australia 'many years before'. She was born at Stockyard Creek Station north of Adelaide in 1883, and trained as a nurse in Melbourne. Apparently she accompanied a lady to England as a nurse and enjoyed the cruise so much that she enlisted on the *Olympic* as a nurse/stewardess. After the sinking of the *Titanic* Evelyn found a place on lifeboat 16. When she was younger Evelyn had learned to row on the River Murray with its tides and currents. She took one of the oars on the lifeboat as it rowed to the *Carpathia*.

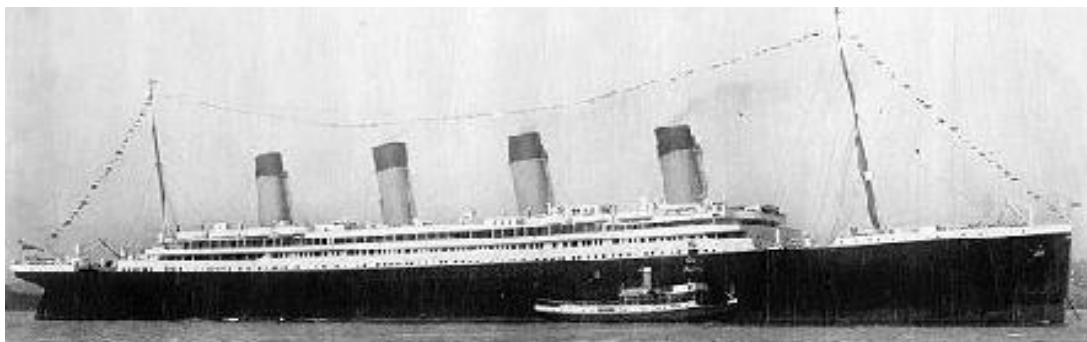
Evelyn was engaged to William Abel James, who was a doctor with the White Star Line; originally he was supposed to be sailing with the *Titanic*, but the roster was changed and he was on the *Macedonia* instead. The couple married shortly afterwards and settled in South Australia.

How well known was Evelyn in Chesterfield? Walter's sister Florence married George Robinson, veterinary surgeon in the town. Shortly before the voyage of the *Titanic*, Evelyn wrote to her aunt saying that she had been to Southampton to sign on, and that she was looking forward with keen pleasure to have her trip on the 'big ship'. It is possible that she had visited Chesterfield to see the family between trips. George and his brother Henry were sons of Josiah Bradbury Robinson and Henry's son Henry Booth Robinson died in Mordialloc in 1907. Today it is a suburb of Melbourne where Evelyn had trained as a nurse. Did they meet? Quite possibly, given the family connection.



Evelyn is quite famous, particularly in Australia, yet little is known about the other survivor connected with Chesterfield. Janet Bowker was born in Ware in Hertfordshire, daughter of Edward Harwood Bowker who was born in Chesterfield. A doctor, he returned to practice in Chesterfield in 1893, by which time Janet was 13-years-old. Unfortunately about this time her parents' marriage broke up and by 1901 Edward was living in Chesterfield and his wife was living in Cheshire. For some reason Janet changed her name to Ruth (Janet was also the name of Edward's elder sister). In 1901 she was working as a hotel book keeper at the Royal York Hotel, Margate. Perhaps she was influenced in her choice of career by her grandfather, James Bowker, headmaster of Bowker's Academy. This school was well known in Chesterfield as it offered an education in commercial subjects as well as classical subjects. Students included Percy Houfton (consultant architect to Chesterfield Borough Council), John Middleton (town clerk of Chesterfield at a time of great change); William Rhodes; Ernest Shentall and Joseph Hatton who went on to become editor of the *Sunday Times*. On the *Titanic* Ruth was a cashier in the first class restaurant. Her father died shortly after the sinking of the *Titanic*. She never married and worked as a bookkeeper at the Wilton Hotel in Westminster, London for many years before she died in 1956, aged 75 years.

When they signed on for the *Titanic*, Evelyn, Ruth and Vera Britten all gave their previous ship as the *Olympic*. In September 1911 the *Olympic* was in collision with the cruiser HMS *Hawke* with Evelyn in the compartment adjoining the place where the full force of the impact occurred. This left the *Olympic* with two large holes above and below the water line. It took two weeks for the damage to *Olympic* to be patched up sufficiently to allow her to return to Belfast for more permanent repairs, which took just over six weeks to complete. By 29 November she was back in service, but during a return voyage to England in February 1912 she lost a propeller blade after hitting a submerged object in the Atlantic and once more she had to be repaired. Although she was back in service before the *Titanic* sailed, several of her crew had enlisted on the *Titanic*.



RMS *Olympic*

On 16 February 1912 the *Derbyshire Advertiser* reported that Charles Markham had left to visit the Panama Canal, which was being constructed at the time. He sailed from Southampton on board the *Olympic* arriving at New York on 14 February (it was on the return journey that the *Olympic* lost part of a propeller). His return journey was also aboard the *Olympic* arriving in England on 17 March. At that time he was immensely influential in local affairs – what would have been the effect on Chesterfield if he had decided to sail on the *Titanic* instead?

Events at Chesterfield Museum and Art Gallery

Chesterfield on Tap

An exhibition looking at the history of Chesterfield breweries as well as mineral water manufacturers in the town.

4 November 2017 – 3 February 2018

Markham & Co

Compiled and presented by CADLHS members, Peter and Maeve Hawkins, this exhibition tells the story of the famous Chesterfield company Markham & Co. Highly recommended.

4 November 2017 – to 13 January 2018

Christmas at the [Revolution House](#)

See the Revolution House decorated for a traditional 17th century Christmas with greenery and flower displays. The house will be open through the festive period from **11am-4pm**. Entry is free, however donations to cover costs are welcome.

[Christmas Carol Concert](#)

Join Holymoorside Brass Band in the garden at the Revolution House to sing your favourite carols and enjoy a mince pie.

14 December 2017 from **6.30pm**

Did you know that in 1921 there was a proposal to fill in the Chesterfield Canal between Chesterfield and Staveley to make a main arterial road? Despite widespread support from local councils, Barnet Kenyon MP and Sir Tudor Walters for the scheme, the Minister of Transport did not give permission for the scheme to go ahead, presumably on the grounds of cost. At the time the *Sheffield Independent* (16 December 1922 p6) reported on an unusual cargo on the canal.

While there is a tendency to be rather chary about doing away with our inland waterways there is little doubt that the Chesterfield Canal, which belongs to the Great Central Railway, has outlived its usefulness. It was opened in 1777, and was a boon for transport until the railways killed it. A few years before the war, however it was actually used in the conveyance of a cargo of oil from Russia to Chesterfield. The whole journey was made by water – by way of the Humber, then by the Trent as far as Stockwith, where the cargo was transferred to barges for the Chesterfield Canal.

December 12th (2nd Tuesday)	January 16 th 2018	February 20 th 2018
Short items by members	Tony Hallam	AGM
Followed by mince pies	The Eastwoods	Followed by David Howes