



Press Release

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LAST LETTER WRITTEN ON BOARD TITANIC ARRIVES IN BELFAST **Historic artefact sold for £119,000 at auction set to go on display in Titanic Belfast**

The last letter ever to be written on board the Titanic, which sold at auction recently for a world record sum of £119,000, has arrived at Titanic Belfast. The historic artefact, written by a mother and daughter who survived the ship's sinking but was never sent, is being loaned to the attraction and will go on display for five years.

The letter was written by Essex-born Esther Hart and her seven-year-old daughter Eva just eight hours before the ship hit an iceberg and sank in April 1912. The letter, intended for her mother in Chadwell Heath, only survived because it was in the pocket of her husband's coat which he had given her to keep warm. He was one of over 1,500 people to die in the disaster.

The letter has been loaned to Titanic Belfast by Scottish businessman Garreth Wood and his wife Nicola, long-time Titanic enthusiasts who recently bought it from the auction buyer. It will now be checked to see if any conservation work is required before going on display in Titanic Belfast's Maiden Voyage Gallery, which is currently being refreshed, after Easter.

Speaking at the official handover of the letter this morning, Tim Husbands CBE, Titanic Belfast's CEO, said:

"This letter carries vast historical significance and, as the world's largest Titanic attraction, Titanic Belfast will provide the ideal home for the next five years. The large sums of money which Titanic artefacts sell for at auction are an indication of the worldwide interest in them.

"This document will prove a fantastic addition to our world-class offer at Titanic Belfast, complementing the modern technology in our galleries which brings Titanic's story to life. We are very grateful to Garreth and his wife Nicola for their generosity in ensuring the letter will reside in Titanic's birthplace for the next five years."

Mrs Hart wrote in the letter that they were enjoying what she called the "wonderful journey" and that they were likely to arrive in New York early because of the speed the ship was doing.

The letter was auctioned in England for £119,000 in April 2014, with the auctioneer describing it as unique because it was the only letter known to be written on board on the

day the ship hit the iceberg. The letter is embossed with the White Star Line flag, headed 'On Board RMS Titanic' and dated 'Sunday afternoon'.

Mr and Mrs Wood commented:

"We first heard about the Titanic letter when we read about it going to auction. This letter is not only a direct link to an iconic place in maritime history, but it also gives a fantastic account of daily life aboard the Titanic.

"We felt it was important that the letter should stay in the UK as Esther Hart was British. Although we were not successful on the day of the auction, we approached the buyer who agreed to sell it to us for a very small profit. Although all the media outlets in the UK reported that an American had bought the letter, we were thrilled to see it stay here in the UK.

"The Titanic exhibition in Belfast is the perfect place to showcase this unique piece of history. We were very keen for people to be able to see and enjoy the letter, and not lock it away in a private collection. Therefore we are both delighted that it will be in the new exhibition for countless people to enjoy."

In the letter, Mrs Hart describes being sick the day before and unable to eat or drink, but that she had since recovered and been to a church service with Eva that morning. She also wrote that Eva had sung "so nicely" to the hymn 'Oh God Our Help in Ages Past' and that they were both due to sing on a concert on board "tomorrow night".

-ENDS-

Notes to editors:

Titanic Belfast

Titanic Belfast is an iconic six-floor building featuring nine interpretive and interactive galleries that explore the sights, sounds, smells and stories of Titanic, as well as the City and people which made her. It is the world's largest Titanic exhibition.

The building houses temporary exhibits, a banqueting suite, education and community facilities, catering and retail space, and a basement car park. Visitors learn about the construction of RMS Titanic and the wide and rich story of Northern Ireland's industrial and maritime heritage.

Supported by the Northern Ireland Executive, Titanic Belfast is a unique public/private partnership funded by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, Belfast City Council, Belfast Harbour and Titanic Quarter Ltd – a sister company of Harcourt Developments. It is operated by Titanic Belfast Ltd and owned by the Titanic Foundation Ltd – a company with charitable status.

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