

JANE WORDEN: A CLONAKILTY CONNECTION WITH THE RMS *LUSITANIA*

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‘And there shall be no more sea’¹

On Saturday, 1 May 1915, the RMS² *Lusitania* sailed out of New York Harbour, bound for Liverpool, for what was to be her final voyage. Before the ship’s departure, warnings had been issued in the American press by the German Embassy which notified passengers that due to the war they would travel in British waters at their own risk.³ The first six days of the crossing proved uneventful, and the passengers enjoyed a quiet and relaxing trip.

On Friday, 7 May, the *Lusitania* had reached the southern coast of Ireland where the ship was sighted by a German U-boat, the *U-20*, approximately 18km south of the Old Head of Kinsale. The U-boat’s commander, Walther Schweiger, fired a single torpedo and the *Lusitania* was hit on the starboard (right) bow. Shortly afterwards, a second explosion occurred on board the ship, and within eighteen minutes one of the largest ships in the world at that time had disappeared beneath the waves. Of the 1266 passengers and 696

crew personnel, 1191 persons either went down with the ship or died during the long hours spent afterwards in the freezing waters.⁴ One of the passengers who travelled in second cabin (second-class) accommodation was Mrs Jane T. Worden (née Goodchild).⁵

Jane was born in the late 1850s or early 1860s in Clonakilty.⁶ Her parents were James Goodchild and Mary Anne Tanner; they were married in Kilgarraff (Church of Ireland) church in Clonakilty on 12 September 1858.⁷ Previously, some anecdotal evidence suggested that Jane's mother was Mary Anne Chiddick. This confusion may have arisen from some sort of relationship between the Goodchilds and the Chiddicks.⁸ It is interesting to note that William Chiddick acted as a witness at the wedding of James Goodchild and Mary Anne Tanner;⁹ therefore, there certainly existed some form of familial connection or friendship. James' father, a weaver, was also named James Goodchild and Mary Anne's father was George Tanner, a shoemaker.¹⁰ The marriage records and later documents indicate that James was also a shoemaker.¹¹ Census records reveal that Mary Anne subsequently became a dressmaker.¹² The couple had nine children, all of whom were still living at the time of the 1911 census. Both the 1901 and 1911 censuses record the couple living in no. 11 Patrick Street, Clonakilty. During this time, they also



Fig. 1: Houses on Patrick Street, Clonakilty, which were probably built in the 1800s. Photo courtesy of Michael O'Connell, West Cork Regional Museum, Clonakilty.

maintained an out-house, presumably at the back of no. 11, which was used as a piggery.¹³ A large number of the buildings on Patrick Street, including no. 11, were replaced by houses built by Clonakilty Urban District Council in the 1950s;¹⁴ hence the unusual current house numbering scheme. The area is now Assumption Place.

Jane probably emigrated to the US in the 1880s. She married Charles E. Worden – a man over twenty years her senior – in Haverhill, Massachusetts, on 28 September 1886.¹⁵ They lived at 137 Riverside Street, in the city of Lowell, Massachusetts, in a house owned by Jane.¹⁶ Charles was a citizen of Great Britain,¹⁷ but some tentative research suggests that he was born in Quebec, Canada, and that he had previously been married to a Johanna Eliza; by 1880, his first wife was living in New Jersey and he had moved to Lowell.¹⁸ Jane, like her mother, worked as a dressmaker and housekeeper, while Charles was a carpenter.¹⁹ The couple enjoyed economic stability with Charles earning an income of between \$1500 and \$2000 per annum, and Jane earning an additional \$1000 per annum.²⁰ Charles became an American citizen on 28 September 1914 and Jane automatically received citizenship via naturalisation.²¹ The couple had no children.

The town of Lowell was founded in the 1820s and quickly developed as a prosperous textile centre. Using local waterways and newly built canals, and with the introduction of new milling technology in the early nineteenth century, Lowell became one of the first factory towns in America. It quickly welcomed the influx of immigrants then pouring into the US from numerous European countries, including Germany, Poland, Portugal and Ireland.²² Most of the Irish who arrived in the 1830s, and afterwards, found that work was available in abundance both in the construction of the town and in the mills themselves. At least three of Jane's brothers and two sisters also emigrated to America, and most of them lived in the Lowell and Massachusetts area.²³ Two of her brothers, George and James Goodchild, lived in Lowell and a third brother, Thomas, lived in Tyngsborough, nearer to Boston. Two of her sisters, one Mrs Julius M. Book, lived in Pawtucketville, Lowell, and the other, Mrs Charles E. Norton, lived in California.²⁴



Fig. 2: This photograph of Jane Worden appeared in the *Lowell Sun*, 8 May 1915.

Jane's father, James, had died in February 1915.²⁵ According to newspaper reports, Jane was travelling on the *Lusitania* because she intended to return to Clonakilty in order to bring her widowed mother, Mary Anne, back to Lowell so that she would be with her family in America.²⁶ This plan was in place before she left for Ireland; Jane intended that they would return to America on board the *Lusitania* which would depart from Liverpool on 15 May.²⁷ Jane's sister, Mrs Julius M. Book, had also intended to make the journey to Ireland but changed her mind at the last minute.²⁸ Believing the voyage could be 'risky', both Jane's husband and her brother George asked her to consider travelling later in the year but she refused to change her plans.²⁹ This was her twelfth trip back to Ireland,³⁰ suggesting she was very familiar and comfortable with the journey.

Another part of the story has come to us recently from Breda Ahern of Clonakilty. Breda's mother was Mary Sutton (b. 1903), who lived in no. 53

Patrick Street and so was a neighbour of the Goodchilds.³¹ In 1915 Mary, then aged about eleven or twelve, was apparently with Jane's mother, Mary Anne, when they heard the explosion as the *Lusitania* was struck. Mary used to claim that when they heard the noise Mary Anne said 'my daughter has gone down in it'.³² The day after the sinking, Mary Anne sent a telegram to Lowell asking if her daughter was on board the ill-fated ship, to which she received a hurried telegram of confirmation.³³ Three days after the sinking of the *Lusitania*, on 10 May, the *Lowell Sun* described Jane's husband, Charles, as 'overcome with grief' but he was still hopeful that Jane might yet be found among the survivors.³⁴ Unfortunately, this did not happen. Charles explained that if her body was found, she would be easily identifiable because she carried on her not only her passport but a second photograph of herself, as was customary in war times.³⁵ Jane did not survive the catastrophe, and her body was never recovered or if recovered, was never identified. She was then in her late fifties or early sixties.

Soon after Jane's death, her husband's health declined: Charles was then in his seventies and he was no longer able to work. Consequently, he moved in with his widowed sister who also lived in Lowell.³⁶ Charles was one of the many relatives of the *Lusitania* victims who lodged a claim against Germany through the Mixed Claims Commission for the loss of his wife, for which he was awarded, on 21 February 1924, the sum of \$7500 (with interest thereon at the rate of five per cent per annum from 1 November 1923), with a further \$650 for the loss of property on the ship (with interest thereon at the rate of five per cent per annum from 7 May 1915).³⁷ Unfortunately, Charles died the same year that the money was awarded. Jane's mother also died in 1924, aged eighty-five.³⁸ Jane's brother, James Goodchild, lived out his long life in Lowell, and died there on 6 August 1963; he was then ninety-six years of age.³⁹ As noted above, Jane's father, James, died in Clonakilty in February 1915 when he was eighty years old; he is buried in Kilgarriff churchyard in Clonakilty town. Jane is also commemorated on his headstone (see Fig. 3).

Finally, it is interesting to note that Jane Worden was not the only local on board the *Lusitania*. A Mrs Julia O'Sullivan (née O'Neill), from 'near Rosscarbery' and her husband, Florence O'Sullivan from Kilgarvan, Co. Kerry, were also on board.⁴⁰ This young couple were returning to Ireland after living in the US for several years. The couple were separated when the *Lusitania*



Fig. 3: Headstone erected on the grave of James Goodchild, Kilgarriff churchyard, Clonakilty. Photo courtesy of Clíodhna O’Leary.

sank but theirs was a happy story as they were both saved: Flor being brought to Queenstown (Cobh) on board the destroyer *O10* and Julia being brought to Kinsale on the naval patrol boat *Heron*.⁴¹

Acknowledgments

My thanks to Michael O’Connell, in the West Cork Regional Museum, Clonakilty; without his research we may never have discovered this Clonakilty connection with the *Lusitania*. The advice of Tim Feen and Michael O’Mahony was also much appreciated and I would like to thank Breda Ahern for relating her mother’s story and Carolyn Kingston née Chiddick for providing information on the Chiddicks.

(Endnotes)

- 1 This epitaph appears on the Goodchild headstone in Kilgarraff churchyard, Clonakilty; it commemorates Jane's death but her body was never recovered/identified. The verse appears to be a variation of a quotation from *Revelation* 21:1.
- 2 Royal Mail Steamer.
- 3 O'Sullivan, P. 2014. *The Sinking of the Lusitania: Unravelling the Mysteries*. Cork, p. 28.
- 4 O'Sullivan, *The Sinking of the Lusitania*, p. 136; Hunt, R. and Gillen, E. 2015. *Sinking the Lusitania: Shadows of Doubt*. Cork, p. 3.
- 5 The Lusitania Resource, <http://www.rmslusitania.info/people/second-cabin/jane-worden/> [accessed 02/09/2015].
- 6 Her reported age differs from source to source making it difficult to determine her birth date.
- 7 Marriage Records, Kilgarraff Parish (Clonakilty), SR District/Reg. Area: Bandon, Returns vol. 2, p. 681; Representative Church Body Library (RCBL) Registers #P665, see <http://homepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~sharonmh/Cork.Registers/Kilgariffe.pdf> [accessed 02/09/2015].
- 8 The Goodchild headstone in Kilgarraff churchyard, Clonakilty, is contained within a burial plot which is shared with the Chiddick and Bennett families; this reinforces the idea of some sort of relationship between the Chiddick and Goodchild families.
- 9 RCBL Registers #P665.
- 10 RCBL Registers #P665.
- 11 RCBL Registers #P665; Census of Ireland, 1901 and 1911, <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie>.
- 12 Census of Ireland, 1901 and 1911. It is interesting to note the difference in the ages of the couple recorded in the censuses: the 1901 census shows six years between the couple while the 1911 census shows just four years; these types of discrepancies are common throughout the various census records.
- 13 Form B.2: Return of Out-Offices and Farm-Steadings, Census of Ireland, 1901 and 1911.
- 14 Information provided in the West Cork Regional Museum, Clonakilty.
- 15 Marriage records available on findmypast.ie; The Lusitania Resource, <http://www.rmslusitania.info/people/second-cabin/jane-worden/>. Jane's husband's name has been recorded elsewhere incorrectly as Patrick.
- 16 *Lowell Sun*, 8 May 1915; Docket no. 288, The Lusitania Resource, <http://www.rmslusitania.info/primary-docs/mcc/jane-worden/> [accessed 02/09/2015].
- 17 Docket no. 288, The Lusitania Resource, <http://www.rmslusitania.info/primary-docs/mcc/jane-worden/>.
- 18 Find A Grave, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=119140610> [accessed 01/09/2015].

- 19 The Lusitania Resource, <http://www.rmslusitania.info/people/second-cabin/jane-worden/>.
- 20 Docket no. 288, The Lusitania Resource, <http://www.rmslusitania.info/primary-docs/mcc/jane-worden/>.
- 21 The Lusitania Resource, <http://www.rmslusitania.info/people/second-cabin/jane-worden/>; Docket no. 288, The Lusitania Resource, <http://www.rmslusitania.info/primary-docs/mcc/jane-worden/>.
- 22 History of Lowell, Massachusetts, <http://www.lowell.com/city-of-lowell/lowell-history/> [accessed 01/09/2015].
- 23 *Lowell Sun*, 10 May 1915.
- 24 *Lowell Sun*, 10 May 1915.
- 25 *Lowell Sun*, 8 May 1915.
- 26 *Lowell Sun*, 8 May 1915; *Southern Star*, 15 May 1915.
- 27 *Lowell Sun*, 8 and 10 May 1915.
- 28 *Lowell Sun*, 8 May 1915.
- 29 *Lowell Sun*, 8 May 1915.
- 30 *Lowell Sun*, 10 May 1915.
- 31 Census of Ireland, 1911.
- 32 Breda Ahern pers. comm. Another connection with the Chiddicks arises here: Mary Sutton, and her sister Stacia Sutton, worked in Chiddick's shop (currently the Chucky Chip) on the corner of New Chapel Street (now Oliver Plunkett Street, Western Road) and Patrick Street; Stacia took over the shop and later bought it from the Chiddicks (Breda Ahern pers. comm.).
- 33 *Lowell Sun*, 10 May 1915.
- 34 *Lowell Sun*, 10 May 1915.
- 35 *Lowell Sun*, 10 May 1915.
- 36 Docket no. 288, The Lusitania Resource, <http://www.rmslusitania.info/primary-docs/mcc/jane-worden/>; The Lusitania Resource, <http://www.rmslusitania.info/people/second-cabin/jane-worden/>.
- 37 Docket no. 288, The Lusitania Resource, <http://www.rmslusitania.info/primary-docs/mcc/jane-worden/>; The Lusitania Resource, <http://www.rmslusitania.info/people/second-cabin/jane-worden/>.
- 38 Goodchild headstone, Kilgarriff churchyard, Clonakilty.
- 39 *Lowell Sun*, 7 Aug. 1963.
- 40 *Southern Star*, 15 May 1915; The Lusitania Resource, <http://www.rmslusitania.info/people/second-cabin/julia-osullivan/> [accessed 01/10/2015]; The Lusitania Resource, <http://www.rmslusitania.info/people/second-cabin/florence-osullivan/> [accessed 01/10/2015]; *Cork Free Press*, 10 May 1915; *Irish Independent*, 10 May 1915.
- 41 The Lusitania Resource, <http://www.rmslusitania.info/people/second-cabin/julia-osullivan/>; The Lusitania Resource, <http://www.rmslusitania.info/people/second-cabin/florence-osullivan/>.