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Hometown centenary events will honour Scots hero of the Titanic



Russell Leadbetter

ONE hundred years ago next month, William Murdoch went down with the Titanic when it sank off the coast of Newfoundland, along with 1516 other people.

But Mr Murdoch's name has always lived on in his home-town of Dalbeattie, Dumfries and Galloway, and the local high school and community are planning to remember him with a series of special events.

There will be a wreath-laying service and a lantern ceremony on April 14 and, six days later, a centenary ball.

A monument to Mr Murdoch is set in the granite walls of Dalbeattie Town Hall.

Jay Young, a teacher at Dalbeattie High, said: "There is still a great deal of interest in Mr Murdoch in the town.

"The school is enormously grateful to the Murdoch family, who have supported the Murdoch Memorial Prize, a school junior dux prize, for many years."

William McMaster Murdoch, First Officer on the ill-fated RMS Titanic, was born in Dalbeattie on February 28, 1873 and educated at the old Dalbeattie Primary School, then at the old High School.

A highly experienced seaman, Mr Murdoch, 39, evacuated passengers and helped to launch 10 lifeboats after the Titanic struck an iceberg.

But James Cameron's 1997 film, Titanic, wrongly depicted him as committing suicide, having shot two passengers trying to get on to a lifeboat.

Cameron subsequently apologised and the film's makers, 20th Century Fox, gave the school a cheque for £5000. Scott Murdoch, the officer's nephew, died in August 2010, in his 90s.

Ms Young added: "We have a local park with a pond and the idea is that the town's children, in conjunction with the local schools, will build lanterns, and there will be a large lantern in the shape of a ship. Some of the lanterns will be symbolically floated on the water early in the evening of April 14.

"The centenary ball will take place in Easterbrook Hall. We are looking for funds to continue the memorial dux prize and the ball will hopefully raise funds for this, as well as the local RNLI, sea-cadets and other charities.

"We hope the ball will draw attention to Dalbeattie as well as honouring the memory of all of those, not just Mr Murdoch, who died on the Titanic 100 years ago."

The school has designed and commissioned a commemorative pin-badge to mark the occasion and help raise funds.

Jock Hume, one of the musicians who played on the deck of the Titanic as it went down, was from Dumfries, near Dalbeattie. His story has been marked in a book, *And the Band Played On*, by his grandson Christopher Ward.



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