

**Background information from Hendry Aldridge & Sons, Auctioneers:**

The violin is German, probably Berlin or Dresden school, circa 1880, bearing a later label Giovan Paolo Maggini Brescia. It is a copy of a Maggini with double purfled back and front, the two piece back of medium curl descending from the joint. The original varnish, now largely absent is of a dark brown colour with a later golden brown covering, its eventful life is reflected in its condition with signs of restoration and large cracks on the body of the instrument.

The tail plate fitted to the violin bears a silver hallmark Chester, 1910 and is engraved "For WALLACE on the occasion of our ENGAGEMENT from MARIA". It was given to Dewsbury resident Wallace Hartley as a gift from his fiancée Maria Robinson on the event of their engagement. Regarded as a hero in Titanic folk lore, Hartley is credited with the decision to lead his eight-strong band into the historic hymn 'Nearer, My God, to Thee' in an attempt to calm passengers as they boarded lifeboats. All eight men perished in the disaster, and Hartley's remains were recovered on April 25<sup>th</sup> 1912 by the crew of the ship, MacKay Bennett. His body was recorded as number 224.

Widely regarded as the world's leading experts in the sale of RMS Titanic memorabilia, Henry Aldridge and Son have unparalleled experience in auctioning and handling the rarest memorabilia to be offered and describe the Hartley Violin as "the Holy Grail."

Since its discovery in 2006, the violin has been the subject of an extensive scientific and historical investigation by some of the leading experts globally in their respective fields. The provenance of the instrument and associated collection can be traced back to Maria Robinson, Wallace's fiancée, its discovery in Halifax Nova Scotia, through to the present day, an aspect of the archive that is covered in depth by Dewsbury author, Christian Tennyson-Ekberg in his 400 page book *Nearer Our God to Thee*.

Henry Aldridge and Son employed the services of the British Government owned Home Office Forensic Science Service, a body providing scientific services to the police and other law enforcement agencies in the UK and overseas to oversee the scientific tests into the collection.

Under the stewardship of Michael Jones, an FSS trace analysis expert with over 29 years' experience in the field, the violin, music case and items recovered from Wallace's body were subjected to numerous tests at the FSS Laboratory in Chipstow, Begbroke Nano, Oxford Materials Characterization Services at the University of Oxford and Ridgeway Clinic in Swindon where a CT scan of the interior of the instrument was conducted. The results of the trace analysis was found to be compatible with material that had been recovered from other Titanic victims including Titanic postal worker Oscar Woody and Third class passenger Carl Asplund

Michael Jones commented "In my opinion the findings in relation to the corrosion associated with the metal fixtures of the travel case in which the violin was recovered, and also to the portfolio would be considered compatible with immersion in seawater. The silver fish plate present on the violin visually appears to be an original fixture. The four screw fixtures appear very heavily corroded. There was no evidence observed to suggest that this plate had been recently attached to the violin or had been attached as a replacement of an earlier fixture. Again the corrosion deposits associated with the surfaces of this silver metal fish plate would be considered compatible with immersion in seawater. This may be further supported by the findings in relation to the lining material of the travel case"

Craig Sopin is a world authority on the history of Titanic, owning one of the largest private collections of Titanic artefacts. Craig has advised museums and auction rooms and is Corporate Secretary of the Titanic International Society.

"To say I was sceptical at first would be an understatement", said Craig Sopin. "But, after I conducted an exhaustively detailed investigation into the history and forensics of the instrument, I became convinced beyond doubt that this violin belonged to Wallace Hartley and that it was with him on RMS Titanic".

Richard Slater is a leading silver expert who serves on the Council of the Gemmological Association of Great Britain and is a graduate of Gem-A. London-based Gem-A is the longest established and most highly respected international gem education body. He was also the head of silver and Jewellery at a leading London auctioneer for over 12 years, he states:

"In my opinion the engraving on the silver panel is contemporary with the hallmarks and all the pieces are in original condition. I have examined the piece using a 10X loupe and it would appear that the silver panel has not been removed from the fish plate"

Andrew Hooker is a renowned violin expert and author, his impressive CV includes several years as head of musical instruments at Sotheby's.

"The style of the violin - that is, inexpensive, German, and factory-made, is entirely consistent with the status of a bandsman on a ship".

Stanley Lehrer is founder and former president, publisher and editorial director of USA Today. He is also the world's foremost collector of Titanic artefacts and memorabilia. Many of his priceless pieces are showcased by Titanic Museum Attractions in Branson, MI and Pigeon Forge, TN in the United States.

"By analysing all the facts about the case and the violin, I am convinced that the violin is indeed the one Wallace Hartley played aboard Titanic and valued it enough to safeguard its survival".

Steve Santini has been a collector, historian and researcher of Titanic related relics for over 30 years and is regarded as a world authority in Titanic recovered items and counts being a consultant on James Cameron's movie "Titanic" on his impressive CV:

"Personally, I am of the opinion that the Hartley violin exhibits exactly the sort of condition issues one could expect to see in an instrument protected in a leather suitcase floating about for a number of days in very cold seawater".

Paul Burns, Curator and VP of Titanic Branson and Titanic Pigeon Forge, the world's leading Titanic museums, commented "I have been profoundly lucky to handle thousands of artefacts from throughout the world's history for more than 25 years. However, I am truly humbled by this precious violin and its provenance package, which is by far the most extensive in my personal experience".

John Joslyn, expedition leader of the first private exploration dive to Titanic and owner of the Titanic Museum Attractions in Branson MI and Pigeon Forge TN, said "I've explored Titanic and documented my discoveries for television and even built two giant museum attractions in tribute to this iconic ship, but when I came face-to-face with the actual violin Hartley had played that cold April night, the whole Titanic experience came into focus, bringing an emotional and melancholy close to a catastrophic chapter in the Titanic story".