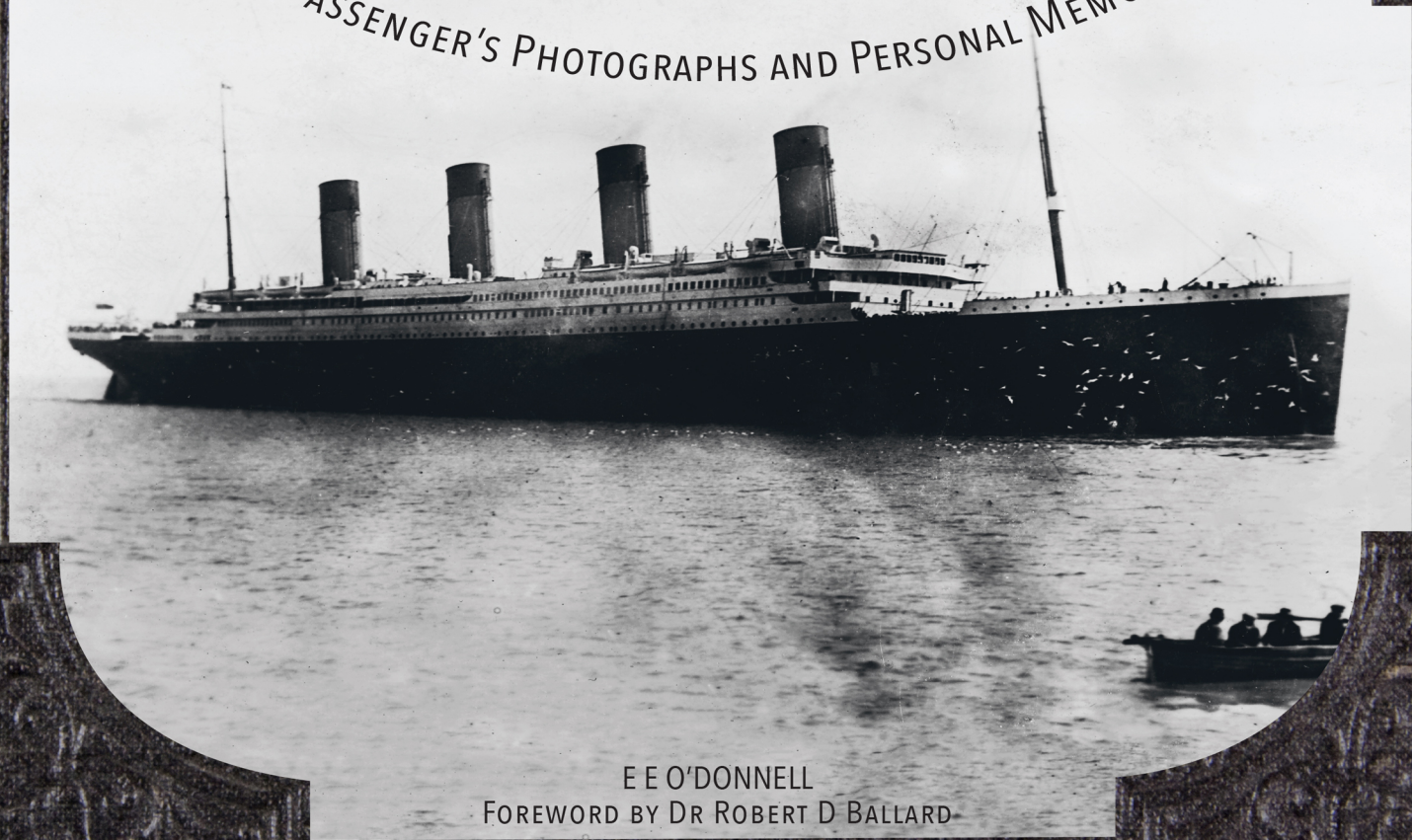


FATHER BROWNE'S
TITANIC ALBUM

A PASSENGER'S PHOTOGRAPHS AND PERSONAL MEMOIR



E E O'DONNELL
FOREWORD BY DR ROBERT D BALLARD

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Fr Frank Browne SJ, MC. Chaplain to Irish Guards, 1915-1920

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DEDICATION TO THOSE WHO DIED THAT NIGHT



MESSENGER
PUBLICATIONS
JESUITS in IRELAND

Messenger Publications, 37 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin 2
www.messenger.ie

ISBN 978-1-910248-27-0

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Text copyright © 2011, E E O'Donnell SJ
Photographs copyright © The Father Browne SJ Collection
First Edition published by Wolfhound Press, Dublin, 1997
Centenary Edition published by Messenger Publications, 2011
Third edition, Messenger Publications, 2016

Father Browne prints are available from Davison & Associates,
6 Leopardstown Gardens, Blackrock, Co Dublin

Designed by Messenger Publications, 2016

Printed in Ireland by Nicholson and Bass

Cover Photograph: One of Fr Browne's last photographs of *Titanic* taken at Queenstown (Cobh) on 11 April 1912.

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Founder/President
Edward S. Kamuda

The Titanic Commutator
The quarterly magazine of the
Titanic Historical Society
continuous publication since 1963

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**The
Titanic Historical Society
Collection**

The Titanic Museum
in Indian Orchard
The collection is an
educational, yet poignant
experience about the *Titanic*
with rare documents next to
more familiar pieces -- a
third-class menu; a wool
carpet piece cut from a
first-class stateroom on
C-Deck; a wood fragment
from a lifeboat; boarding
passes for the *Titanic*;
postcards and letters mailed
from the ill-fated liner; the
Marconigram ice warning
from S S *Amerika*; *Titanic*
lookout Frederick Fleet's
rendition of the fatal iceberg;
an original *Titanic* blueprint
presented by the builders,
Harland and Wolff and
recently discovered plans for
a 1,000 four-funneled liner.
An entire section on
Titanic's sisters *Olympic* and
Britannic, photographs,
china, posters, newspapers,
books, original paintings,
sheet music, survivor
keepsakes and association
pieces are at this unique site.

Marine Museum at Fall River
Half of the THIS Collection
is here including Mrs. Astor's
lifejacket, Lookout Fred
Fleet's discharge book and a
deckchair retrieved by the
Minic. Be sure to see the 28'
1-ton *Titanic* created for the 1953
20th-Century Fox production,
Titanic. The THS was entirely
responsible for bringing the film
model to the museum in 1985.

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12 September, 1996

Father Eddie O'Donnell S.J.
Gonzaga College
Sandford Road
Dublin 6
Ireland

Dear Father Eddie,

We were so pleased to learn the news of your new book, "Father Browne's *Titanic*." If you recall when you kindly addressed our Titanic Historical Society convention in Belfast, No. Ireland at the Europa Hotel last April, you mentioned your plans to publish his photographs and diary.

My wife, Karen, our historian, Don Lynch, and myself are quite excited about this project and it is an honor as officers of the T.H.S. to be of assistance. These images by Father Browne are of immense importance to *Titanic* historians as well as the general public who have developed an intense curiosity about this great liner owing to increasing publicity. In her brief existence there are very few actual illustrations to chronicle not only the vessel but also those who were aboard *Titanic's* historic voyage. Few will be able to read this book and not come away without a greater understanding of the people pursuing daily shipboard activities and the beauty and grace of the vessel herself. Some of the passengers and crew in the photos were saved while others shared a different fate. Among the survivors was young Douglas Spedden who can be seen on deck spinning a whip top while others watch his performance. Not so fortunate was Captain Smith, viewed in another photograph, looking down from the bridge at the tenders below at Queenstown. From that height he observed passengers boarding the ship as Father Browne departed and *Titanic* sailed into her destiny.

These remarkable and haunting images are a treasure and we are grateful to Father Browne for leaving a legacy of memories in the photographs of the ship that has become a legend. Likewise, to yourself, our deep appreciation for presenting this document for future generations.

Yours sincerely

Edward S. Kamuda
Founder/President
Titanic Historical Society Inc.

FOREWORD

I felt privileged when Father Eddie O'Donnell came to visit me at my home on Cape Cod in January 1997. In a certain sense, I felt he was a kindred spirit as I was aware that he had made a major discovery in 1985, when he found Father Browne's collection of more than 42,000 photographs. I knew that ten books of these pictures had already been published, including one in French. The purpose of his visit was also clear and I was delighted to oblige him by agreeing to write this foreword.

Some of Father Browne's *Titanic* photographs were already familiar to me since I had used many of them in my own books (such as *The Discovery of the Titanic*) but I had not seen the album in its entirety, nor had I read Frank Browne's account of the maiden voyage as far as Queenstown.

Looking through these photographs taken 85 years previously recalled very vividly to me my first glimpses of the liner on the sea floor in 1985. The one of the lifeboat hanging in its now empty davits and the one of the anchor being raised for the last time were poignant reminders of what we found two-and-a-half miles beneath the surface of the Atlantic Ocean.

Let me single out one picture in particular. During my second visit to the liner in 1986, as our underwater robot, *Jason Junior*, slowly passed by the gymnasium windows, remnants of the gym equipment could be seen, including some of the metal grillwork that had protected such contraptions as the electric camel – a turn-of-the-century exercise machine. Frank Browne's photograph of the interior of that gymnasium and the card given to him by Mr McCawley – the ship's physical education officer – bring home to me in a really tangible way the fact that human beings once exercised their muscles here. The single word 'Lost' in Frank Browne's caption reinforces my belief in the sacredness of the gravesite.

Apart from the photographs I was fascinated – as I am sure every reader will be – by Frank Browne's description of his days on board; and I was intrigued by the poem he wrote afterwards.

The additional materials that have been included make this a most unusual book; so it is with great pleasure that I commend Father O'Donnell's work and wish the book the success it deserves.

Dr Robert D Ballard, 1997



One of Frank Browne's last photographs of Titanic, taken at Queenstown (Cobh) on 11 April, 1912. He sent this picture to the Odell family and it is sometimes erroneously attributed to them. The twelve photographs taken by the Odells, who disembarked with Frank Browne at Queenstown, are the only other surviving pictures of Titanic taken by maiden voyagers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincerest thanks to those who have helped me put this book together. Father John Guiney SJ, former Treasurer of the Irish Jesuits (who kept the Browne album safe for many years); Karen Kamuda of Ludlow, Mass. (who masterminded my profitable journey to New England early in 1997); her husband the late Ed Kamuda (who not only wrote the Preface but showed me around his Titanic Museum at Indian Orchard, Mass. and gave me many fascinating souvenirs); Dr Robert D Ballard of Woods Hole, Cape Cod (who kindly invited me to his home and agreed to write the foreword); the editor of *The Belvederian* (for permission to reproduce the article in Chapter Five); Andrea and Eddie Doherty of Long Island (for their hospitality in New York and for showing me White Star relics there); Mr Tom McCluskie, Administration Manager of Harland and Wolff Ltd (for inviting me to the liner's birthplace in Belfast); Mr Donald Hyslop of the Maritime Museum, Southampton (for showing me the *Titanic* memorabilia there); Melvin Lash and Jasper Coffman of the Marine Museum, Fall River, Mass. (for showing me their 30-foot model of the *Titanic* and many other treasures related to the liner); Donald Lynch and Ken Marschall of Redondo Beach, California (for invaluable help with the captions); Stephen Brooks, Military History Officer, Portsmouth City Museum; Lt Cdr Liam Smith of Cobh (who formerly worked for James Scott & Co, the shipping agents who sent Frank Browne his *Titanic* ticket); David Aherne, the 87-year-old former pilot of Cobh (who is blessed with a brilliant memory and gave me its full benefit); Vincent McMahan,

Manager of Irish Ferries, Cork (who went to a lot of trouble in producing documents invaluable to my research); Maura Kennedy of the Gilbert Library, Dublin (for letting me read the Dublin newspapers of April, 1912); Edwin Davison of Dublin (for computerising Father Browne's captions and finding the relevant ones for this book); his father, David Davison, Head of the Photographic Department, Dublin Institute of Technology (for making the prints and for his enlargement of the final photograph of Captain Edward Smith); Ursula and Ted O'Brien (who did such a fine job in presenting my material); and to Seamus Cashman of Wolfhound Press, the original publisher.

Further Acknowledgements (2016)

Thanks, first of all, to Father Donal Neary of Messenger Publications for agreeing to publish a new paperback Edition of this book. Also to his team, especially Cecilia West (production) and Paula Nolan (design). Also to David and Edwin Davison for their digitalised prints.

My gratitude goes to Senan Molony (author of *The Irish Aboard 'Titanic'*) for drawing my attention to Father Browne's piece in the *Cork Constitution* which is reproduced here in full.

Finally a special word of thanks to *Titanic* historian Vincent McMahan – already acknowledged above – for many further services rendered in the meantime.

INTRODUCTION

E E O'DONNELL SJ

My purpose in this introduction is threefold. First I want to tell the reader who is not familiar with the life and work of Father Browne a little about that heroic life and that remarkable work. Secondly, I will try to tighten the focus and situate this *Titanic* album in the context of Father Browne's photographic output as a whole. Finally I want to zoom in still closer in order to give an understanding of the importance in Frank Browne's life of ships and shipping and to explain how, from his earliest years, he developed an interest in maritime and nautical matters which would endure throughout his life.

Life and Work

Sunday's Well is a leafy and prosperous suburb of the city of Cork, terraced high about the River Lee as it makes its two-armed embrace of Munster's capital on the south coast of Ireland. It was there in 1880 that Frank Browne was born on 3 January. He was the eighth child of Brigid and James Browne and he was baptised in the Cathedral Church of SS Mary and Anne, Shandon – which stands beside the famous steeple of that name – on the 8th day of January. The following day his mother died of puerperal fever.

Brigid Browne was a niece of James Hegarty, Mayor of Cork, and a cousin of Sir Daniel Hegarty who became Cork's first Lord Mayor. Like her husband James, a wealthy merchant, she had grown up in Sunday's Well and had been prominent in the social and charitable activities of the local parish. James, too, was to meet a tragic end: he drowned while ocean

swimming at Crosshaven, County Cork, when Frank was in his teens. As a result, the father figure in Frank's life was his uncle, Robert Browne, the Bishop of Cloyne whose cathedral stood above the town of Cobh. At that time Cobh was known to Irish emigrants and other transatlantic passengers by the name of Queenstown.

Frank Browne's schooldays were spent at the Bower Convent in Athlone, Christian Brothers College in Cork, Belvedere College in Dublin and Castleknock College in County Dublin. He graduated from the last of these in 1897 and then set out on a tour of mainland Europe with his brother and his new camera – a gift from Uncle Robert. The photographs he took in France, Italy and Switzerland were the first shots in a salvo of photography that is still reverberating over a century later.

On his return to Ireland in September 1897, Frank entered the Jesuit novitiate at Tullabeg and duly took his first vows of poverty, chastity and obedience two years later. He then went up to the Royal University in Dublin where he was a strict contemporary of the not-so-strict James Joyce. Since both of these young men had been to Belvedere College, they would have known one another quite well. Indeed 'Mr Browne, the Jesuit' was to make several appearances, many years later, in *Finnegans Wake*. In their Honours BA examination in 1902, Joyce scored 313 out of 900 in English; Browne scored 352. In Latin Joyce received 352 (out of a possible 1,200) as against Browne's 815. In different senses, they were both late developers.

INTRODUCTION

In 1902, Frank was sent to study philosophy for three years at Chieri, near Turin in the north of Italy. We know that during his summer holidays he made a serious study of painting, going to see the Old Masters in the galleries of Milan, Florence and Venice as well as those in nearby Turin and Genoa. What he learned from these Italian masterpieces, in such matters as balance, compositional skill and attention to detail, would be of immense importance later in his own artistic medium.

Returning to Dublin in 1906, Frank Browne was sent to teach in his old *alma mater*, Belvedere College. During the first of the five years he taught there, he founded *The Belvederian* as a college journal, and the Camera Club to which he invited many distinguished lecturers. This period of a Jesuit's formation is known as 'Regency' and is designed to give experience of work at the chalk-face of secondary education to which most Jesuits at that time returned after ordination.

In 1911 Frank crossed to the south side of Dublin's River Liffey to begin his theological studies at Milltown Park. So it was during his second year there that his Uncle Robert gave him a treat: the trip of a lifetime – a two-day cruise on the world's largest liner, *RMS Titanic*.

Frank's liner voyage brought him from Southampton to Cherbourg and from there to Queenstown where he disembarked. We shall be examining these days in more detail later. Suffice it to say here that it was not his only brush with death.

Frank Browne was ordained to the priesthood by his Uncle Robert on 31st July, 1915 and his first assignment was as chaplain to the Irish Guards who were then serving on the front lines in France and Flanders. For the duration of the

first World War, he devoted himself to the troops and earned a reputation for his heroic dedication to his duties. He was injured five times, on one occasion needing to have his jaw wired back into place. His lungs were severely damaged by mustard gas in April 1918.

His commanding officer, Colonel (later Field Marshal Lord) Alexander, described Father Browne as 'the bravest man I ever met'; he knew that the chaplain earned the MC and Bar from British authorities, the French *Croix de Guerre* and his personal decoration from the King of the Belgians.

Among the treasured possessions of the Irish Guards at their headquarters in Wellington Barracks, London, is a leather-bound album of Browne's photographs entitled 'The Watch on the Rhine'. These were taken during 1919 when the guardsmen were stationed in Cologne and Bonn. The chaplain was not demobilised until the spring of 1920 when he returned to Dublin. The War of Independence was then raging in Ireland. On the eve of Kevin Barry's execution Father Browne cycled to the Viceregal Lodge in the Phoenix Park to plead for the life of his former pupil in Belvedere. The Viceroy, Lord French (who had led the British Expeditionary Force to war in 1914), refused to intervene.

Not long afterwards, the ex-chaplain was appointed Superior of St Francis Xavier's Church in Dublin, but his health began to deteriorate gradually. His lungs were still contaminated by the 1918 gassing. When other remedies failed, his doctor recommended an ocean voyage and a warmer climate. This was how Father Browne came to spend two years in Australia where he was soon well enough to photograph the horse races in Melbourne, the yacht races in Sydney Harbour, cricket matches in Adelaide and Brisbane, and a sheep-shearing

INTRODUCTION

competition at Kangarooobie.

On his way to Australia he had stopped off at Cape Town and taken many interesting pictures of the Cape Province of South Africa; he returned via Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Aden, Suez, Salonika, Naples, Toulon, Gibraltar, Algeciras and Lisbon, thus adding an important international dimension to his collection of photographs.

From 1925 to 1929 Father Browne was back at his post in Dublin and then he became a member of the Retreats and Missions staff of the Irish Jesuits, a position which he held for the rest of his life. This work brought him as a preacher to practically every parish in Ireland and to many churches in England, Scotland and Wales. He worked mainly in the evenings, so he had the daylight hours at his disposal for photographing the neighbourhood, its beauty spots and its ugly sights, its people old and young.

In 1927 Browne became a vice-president of the first Irish International Salon of Photography. The two other vice-presidents were Chief Justice Hanna and General Eoin O'Duffy, Commissioner of the Irish Police. The president was Sir John Lavery RA and the Salon was such a success that it continued every other year, under the same officers, until the outbreak of World War II in 1939.

During the 1930s Fr Browne was commissioned to do photographic work by several Irish government departments, by the governing body of the Church of England and by the British Museum. He contributed illustrated articles to many periodicals, including *The Kodak Magazine*. He became a personal friend of the Managing Director of Kodak Great Britain, George Davison, who was in a position to give the priest free film for the rest of his life.

That life continued until 1960. Lord Alexander travelled from England to visit Father Browne on his deathbed in Dublin and Lord Nugent wrote his obituary in *The Irish Guards Association Journal* where he said that 'everyone in the Battalion, officer or man, Catholic or Protestant, loved and respected Father Browne and he had a great influence for good. A great Christian, a brave and lovable man, we who knew him so well will always be grateful for his friendship and for the example he set.'

Since the photographer had taken nearly 42,000 pictures during his long life, it is hardly surprising to learn that one of these shows the Jesuit burial-plot in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin, where Father Browne now rests in peace.

The *Titanic* Photographs in Context

If I had been writing this introduction ten years ago, I would have said that the most newsworthy fact about Father Browne was that he sailed on the *Titanic*. That is no longer the case. The most interesting fact now is that he is being recognised as one of the world's greatest photographers of all time. Let me explain how this came about.

When he died in 1960 Father Browne's trunkful of negatives was deposited in the archives of the Irish Jesuits in Dublin. Twenty-five years passed. In 1985 I had reason to consult the archives and spotted the old trunk, which lay buried beneath a multitude of files and documents. On unearthing the trunk, I read the words 'Father Browne's Photographs' chalked on its lid. The inscription meant little to me, because the priest had died shortly after I joined the Jesuits myself. I did remember hearing that a priest called Browne had been on the maiden voyage of the *Titanic* and knew that his album of photographs

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was kept in a safe. I had no idea that he had taken so many other pictures. You can imagine my amazement, then, when I opened that trunk and found it packed with wallets of negatives, all neatly captioned and dated. The first pack I examined contained photographs of Pompeii (Italy) and La Linea (Spain), dated 1925. These were taken, as I know now, on the return journey from Australia.

The photographs looked superb to me and immediately I thought of having them published. Wolfhound Press in Dublin took a similar view and published its first selection in 1987. A volume has appeared annually every since. That first book took the critics by storm and quickly became a best-seller in Ireland. Many experts in photography came to view the Browne Collection. The first of these, David Davison (Head of the Department of Photography in Dublin's Institute of Technology), explained that it would be essential – and costly – to transfer the negatives from their nitrate base to safety-film before the images disintegrated. Thanks to generous sponsorship from Allied Irish Bank, this work was soon put in train. The Collection has now been saved and the captions indexed by computer.

Ark Life (Allied Irish Bank's assurance subsidiary) began mounting annual exhibitions of Father Browne's work in 1992; to date the prints have been shown in nearly eighty cities and towns throughout Ireland. In 1993 the Guinness brewery mounted a large exhibition of the Dublin pictures in its Hopstore Gallery. In 1994 RTÉ (Ireland's national television service) aired six half-hour documentary programmes on the Collection. This series, entitled *The Day Before Yesterday*, was so successful that it was re-broadcast twice.

Since Christmas of 1995 when Wolfhound Press published

Father Browne's Australia, the Collection has been earning international recognition. The Australian book rapidly sold out. At Easter 1996, a French book of Browne's photographs came from the press of Anatolia Editions, Paris. This coincided with the opening of a magnificent exhibition of Father Browne's work at the Georges Pompidou Centre in Paris. The then Presidents Jacques Chirac of France and Mary Robinson of Ireland were among the 600,000 people who went to see *L'Irlande du père Browne* before it left the French capital for further viewings at Montpellier in the Midi and Lorient in Brittany.

During the autumn of 1996 Allied Irish Bank gave a display of Browne's prints in Germany, in conjunction with the Frankfurt Book Fair. Towards the end of that year Wolfhound Press published *Father Browne's England*. Another major exhibition of his Irish photographs opened in Dublin and then toured the rest of Ireland.

In the exhibitions to date only half-a-dozen of Father Browne's *Titanic* photographs have been shown to the public. Others have appeared in recent *Titanic* books but the entire set had not been seen until this book. Taken by 'a master photographer with an unerring eye' – to quote the London *Independent* art critic – these 1912 pictures, readers will realise, represent some of Father Browne's early work as a photographer. Although he began taking pictures in 1897, his Collection contains only about eight hundred negatives dated before 1912 whereas the bulk of the other 41,000 photographs were taken between 1924 – when the priest went on his rest-cure to Australia and had the leisure to practise his skills in earnest for two full years – and 1954 when old age began to steal up on the old soldier.