

Eva Miriam Hart JP MBE (1905-1996)

Eva Miriam Hart was a member of Soroptimist International of East London from 1962 until her death on February 14, 1996. She was club President during 1970-71 and a member for 34 years. A survivor of the Titanic disaster, Eva dedicated much of her life to tell the world what happened on the fateful night the RMS Titanic sank. She may be the only Soroptimist to have had a pub named in her honour - 'The Eva Hart' in Chadwell Heath, east London.

Eva was born on 31 January 1905 and lived much of her life in Chadwell Heath, East London. Aged only seven years old, on 10 April 1912 she boarded the RMS Titanic with her parents as second-class passengers at Southampton. Her father, a builder, planned that the family would start a new (more prosperous) life in Canada. Instead, disaster struck and the ship sank. Eva and her mother survived, but her father died in the catastrophic event. Eva and her mother were rescued from the sea and returned to England.



An outspoken critic of the Titanic's lack of sufficient lifeboats Eva was much in demand as a speaker and broadcaster. In a 1993 interview she said: "I saw that ship sink," "I never closed my eyes. I didn't sleep at all. I saw it, I heard it, and nobody could possibly forget it." "I can remember the colours, the sounds, everything," she said. "The worst thing I can remember are the screams." And then the silence that followed. "It seemed as if once everybody had gone, drowned, finished, the whole world was standing still. There was nothing, just this deathly, terrible silence in the dark night with the stars overhead."

Eva lived an eventful life and in 1974 was awarded an MBE for public and political services. An accomplished singer; in the late 1920s she overcame her fear of ships to travel to Australia in the hope of building a singing career. She sang semi-professionally in Australia and, returning to Chadwell Heath in the early 1930s, sang in and around East London. During World War Two she sang to the troops passing through Ilford, but was also actively involved in air raid communications and rationing. Eva worked for many years as a welfare officer, then welfare consultant for the Sterling Engineering Co in Dagenham. Active in public life she served as a Magistrate, a member of the Parole Board, a prison visitor, active member of the Women's Royal Voluntary Service, counsellor for battered wives; local Head of National Savings, a family planning advisor and an organiser for the local Conservative Party.

Eva's life and her contribution to our knowledge of the Titanic history are marked by a tree and commemorative plaque (donated by the British and Swiss Titanic Societies) in St. Chad's Park in Dagenham, East London, by the pub named after her, the "Eva Hart" in Chadwell Heath and by the many recorded interviews she gave during her life. Her autobiography ('A Girl Aboard the Titanic', 2012) recounts an eventful and active life. Her story is also recounted in 'Shadow of the Titanic: A survivor's story' 1994, 'Shadow of the Titanic: The Extraordinary Stories of Those Who Survived' 2012 by Andrew Wilson and in 'The Jews of the Titanic, A Reflection of the Jewish World on the Epic Disaster' 2018 by Eli Moskowitz.

A Soroptimist East London member who knew Eva recounts that she was so well known that she received visitors and correspondence from all over the world. Some letters lacked her full address but somehow the Royal Mail always got them to her.

Soroptimist East London is not in contact with Eva Hart or any of her relatives.